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MAKING SENSE OF TEACHING: STUDENT TEACHERS' ACCOUNTS

by

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A THESIS

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.....John Young.....
Supervisor
.....C. Chamberlin.....
.....Ray Fox.....
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Date..Oct. 12/83.....

DEDICATION

To my wife Ingibjorg and sons Brynjar and Baldur Freyr, whose understanding and support made this study possible.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to explore in what terms, and by what means, student teachers make sense of their teaching practicum experience. This includes focusing on their conceptualization and transmission of their experience: what is communicated, how, and possibly why. The "underlying" purpose is to investigate student teachers' sense for social structure, particularily their awareness of how social structural and cultural constraints influence their own and others' teaching behavior. The aim is to show how this "sense" penetrates their everyday meanings, activities and plans of actions.

The study is on the one hand guided by an interest in student teachers' socialization which takes place through their formal education and their teaching practicum experience, but on the other hand the study is grounded in the debate over the possibilities and shortcomings of "interpretive" sociology, particularily the symbolic interactionist and phenomenological approaches.' It is argued in this thesis that interpretive sociology, contrary to what is so often maintained, is positively capable of dealing with "structural" and "power" issues, and that the notions of structure and power are central concepts in the explanation of human action from an interpretive point of view.

'From now on, when symbolic interactionism and social phenomenology are discussed together it will be abbrivated as SI/Phenomenology.

The study is a descriptive study of the lifeworld of student teachers at the University College of Education in Iceland. It was conducted over three months, from January to March, 1983. The method used for data collection were interviewing, tape-recording of several group discussions with six to eight students, tape-recording of large group discussions, participant observation, documentary analysis and questionnaire.

The focus of analysis is on student teachers' "knowledge" of school life and teaching: of "constraining" aspects of educational institutions, including ideological and material constraints; of pupils and pedagogical guidance, including barriers to "good" instruction; of relevant interpretations and vocabulary, including actions congruent with these interpretations.

Main findings of the study revealed:

1. the pragmatic and instrumental nature of student teachers' orientations.
2. the "collectivizing" strategies by which individual experiences are collectively discussed and evaluated.
3. that student teachers' definitions of teaching are posed within a context which points to their awareness of social structural and cultural constraints upon teaching behavior.
4. that contrary to many sociological studies on teachers and student teachers, student teachers' "coping strategies" are not exclusively directed towards the

constraints of the classrooms but quite as much to the material and ideological constraints of the school and the wider set of social expectations.

5. that in order to know how to cope, student teachers are forced to perform considerable "interpretive work," locating specific meanings within a larger set of social and cultural meanings in order to find out the "appropriate" meanings of things and events and actions congruent with these meanings.
6. that instead of seeing teaching practicum as a means for relating "theory and practice," it can properly be seen as the hidden curriculum of teachers' training.
7. and finally it is concluded, given the above facts, that student teachers can properly be characterized as their own social ethnographers.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In spite of a long history of interpretive studies in the sociology of education (Waller, 1932; Becker, 1952, 1961; Cicourel & Kituse, 1963), the last decade was primarily characterized by theoretical and methodological debates over the possibilities and limitations of interpretive approaches within the sociology of education.[2] Foremost among the criticisms raised against interpretive sociology, either of phenomenological or symbolic interactionist origin, concerned the perceived inability of these approaches to deal with "structural" and "power" issues (Sharp & Green, 1975; Karabel & Halsey, 1977). As Sharp and Green (1975, p.24) put it:

> "The phenomenological framework does not enable us to pose the question why it is that certain stable institutionalized meanings emerge from practice rather than others or the extent to which the channelling of interpreted meanings is socially structured and related to other significant aspects of social structure."

However, in spite of noticeable changes towards more "macro" and "structural" kind of analysis in educational research in the latter part of the last decade, the above criticism was

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[2] I use the concept of interpretive sociology in the same sense as Howard Becker used interpretative sociology, i.e. to characterize collectively the various sociological orientations which call for a subjective interpretation of social phenomena.

never fully accepted by sociologists of education. David Hargreaves (1978), for example, argued that much of the criticism of interpretive sociology was based upon uncorrect assumptions about the nature of these approaches. And contrary to the widely accepted criticism, Hargreaves argued that the notions of "structure" and "power" are essential to interpretive sociology, quoting both Becker (1963) and Waller (1932) to show how these studies "have made important contribution to the study of power" (1978, p.11). But what interpretive sociology does, however, is to avoid unnecessary reification of social structures, that is treating them as if they had an objective and independent existence separated from the social context in which they are supposedly being observed through "indicators" (Heyman, 1979, p.244), or seeing them in purely behavioristic terms as merely a given probability of certain events to appear.

It is one of the fundamental assumptions of the present study that interpretive approaches have the potential for overcoming the traditional - theoretical and methodological - dichotomies between "macro" and "micro" and "structure" versus "action" so prevalent in the sociological literature. By focusing both on how the individual perceives and interprets the world and the "boundary conditions" for the structure of social action (Cicourel, 1964, p.203), interpretive sociology is able to show how even the most "mundane" activity is both the situated accomplishment of social actors as well as being constrained by the wider

social setting in which the activity takes place.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore how student teachers make use of "background knowledge" of various aspects of social life, of constraints, power relations, expectations, etc., in accounting for their past educational experiences as well as in anticipating and and planning their future activity. In other words, it seeks to study their common-sense knowledge of social structure, or what we we call sense for social structure, and how this "sense" is manifested in their everyday discussions about teaching. This includes, first, constructing a "model" of social actors which illustrates the significance of these aspects of social life, and secondly, analysing phenomenologically student teachers' perceptions and conceptualizations of teaching: of difficulties encountered in their teaching practice; their explanations of these difficulties; their objectives; their evaluations of schools; their definitions of "teaching," "learning," "ability," etc., and the nature of their vocabulary.

1.2 The Significance of the Study

Research on teacher training has frequently drawn attention to an apparent "discontinuity" between programmes of training and the later classroom activity and values of teachers (Denscombe, 1982; Hanson & Herrington, 1976; Lacey,

1977; Lortie, 1975; Morrison & McIntyre, 1972; Wehlage, 1981). Unfortunately, these "facts" of educational life are seldom explained in any rational way, but usually in terms of student teachers' "responses" to material or ideological constraints. By merely stating the "conditions" under which these these "attitudes" are formed, and ignoring the subjective meanings involved or the sense in which these "facts" are the situated accomplishments of student teachers, most of these studies do not go, in my view, beyond the model of man Harold Garfinkle (1967) characterized as the "cultural dope" or "judgemental dope model" of social actors.

In contrast to such a "passive" or "irrational" model of socialization, the present study adopts a phenomenological stance which emphasizes the intentional or purposive elements of human interaction. Instead of seeing student teachers as merely "responding" to "external" constraints of their enviroment, "in the thoughtless manner of Skinnerian rats" (A. Hargreaves, 1978), student teachers are presented as practical social theorists, drawing upon and applying public, socially distributed and idealized knowledge, in order to come to terms with their social reality (Garfinkel, 1967; Giddens, 1982). It will be attempted to show that such "practical theorizing," or what Cicourel (1970) described as the use of "interpretive procedures," presupposes a fairly good (or adequate) knowledge of social structure!

If successful in achieving these objectives, the study should have some theoretical significance as it tries to deal explicitly with some of the most fundamental problems in sociological theory, i.e. the problems related to the dilemma of presenting social actors so free as to ignore all social constraints upon their actions or so determined by social constraints that there is no room for consciousness or purposiveness in human life.

Part of these objectives is the aim of investigating the meaning of teaching practicum from the student teachers' point of view. It will seek to probe what lies beneath terms frequently used to describe the function and significance of the teaching practicum, such as "relating theory and practice," "giving insight," "providing experience," and so forth. In attempting to grasp the "deeper" meaning of the teaching practicum in this sense, the study should have some implications for educationalists concerned with teachers training programs and for the self-understanding of student teachers. It is believed that this particular topic is a very neglected topic in the literature on teachers' training.

1.3 Research Strategy

Phenomenological researchers frequently object to narrow categorization for data analysis which may unnecessarily confine the analysis. Schutz's phenomenology of everyday life is an attempt to avoid the use of too rigid

framework for data analysis, i.e. to fit the data into irrelevant predetermined definitions, hypotheses, models or theories. Accordingly, my attempt is to avoid as far as possible the "imposition" of predefined categories on student teachers' accounts but to present their views as originally as possible. However, it is assumed that there is no "pure" description of social life and all interpretations contain a point of view; a view of knowledge; of the nature of individuals and society; and of the possible ways the social world can be investigated. This is taken to mean that it is of crucial importance that such a study should be guided by an explicit model of social actors which specifies the conditions upon which the study is conducted. And in line with the theoretical foundations of the present study, it is expected that such a model, or conceptual framework, must be able to "grasp" the voluntary elements of social action without ignoring the social constraints upon human actions.

It is hoped that such a conceptual framework will increase the reliability of the study by specifying the conditions under which the data are selected, classified and compared. In this way, the reader should be in better position to evaluate the significance of the findings.

1.4 Assumptions

This study is based on several assumptions related to its theoretical framework. Of all known and unknown assumptions uderlying the study, some need special attention. Simply stated, it is assumed that:

1. the relationship between researcher and subjects is entirely voluntary on both sides.
2. the researcher is able to achieve enough "conceptual distance" from his respondents to retain the necessary objectivity without losing touch with their situated meanings.
3. "the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedure for making those settings 'account-able'" (Garfinkel, 1967, p.1).

1.5 Delimitations and Limitations

The study was delimited to a sample of 3rd year student teachers at the University College of Education in Iceland.

The major limitation of the study is that it presents a static and a-historical view of student teachers' accounts which necessarily limits the explanatory significance of the study.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

It is hoped that most of the terms used in this thesis become understandable from their use. However, there are terms which may become problematic to those who are not familiar with the phenomenolgical terminology. In order to help the reader in that case, few definitions are provided, definitions which are either germane to phenomenology or have been redefined by phenomenologists.[3]

Attitude - "A general posture or stance taken toward larger spheres of life and interest, including a particular 'style' of thinking, for example: the the common-sense attitude; the scientific attitude."

Experience - "The basic starting point of all phenomenological considerations is the essential actual, or immediate vivid, experience, that is, the subjective, spontaneously following stream of experience in which the individual lives and which, as a stream of consciousness, carries with it spontaneous linkages, memory traces, etc., of other, prior, experiences."

Idealization - "A general principle issuing from many kinds of past experiences and expressing confidence expectations concerning future experiences. For example, with the idealization of 'I can do it again', the conviction of the reliability and basic stability of the world of everyday life is expressed."

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[3] These definitions offered here are directly taken from Helmut Wagner's glossary in his book Alfred Schutz: On Phenomenology and Social Relations (1970).

Intentionality - "The most basic characteristic of consciousness: it is always the consciousness of something; it is directed towards something, and in turn is "determined by the intentional object whereof it is a consciousness" (Schutz).

Intersubjectivity - "A category which, in general refers to what is (expecially cognitively) common to various individuals. In daily life, a person takes the existence of others for granted. He reasons and acts on the self-understood assumption that these others are basically persons like himself, endowed with consciousness and will, desires and emotions. The bulk of one's ongoing life experiences confirms and reinforces the conviction that, in principle and under 'normal' cricumstances, persons in contact with one another 'understand' each other at least to the degree to which they are able to deal successfully with one another."

Knowledge - "For a person in everyday life, knowledge is whatever he thinks is the case. Essentially, it concerns practical matters and, frequently, consists of recipes for all kinds of conduct and activity. Common-sense knowledge may range from near-expertness to extreme vagueness. What a person knows, in toto, is his stock of knowledge. As a whole, this stock is incoherent, inconsistent, and only partially clear. It serves its purpose adequately as long as its recipes yields satisfactory results in acting, and its tenets satisfactory explanations."

Life-World - "also: World of everyday life . The total sphere of experiences of an individual which is circumscribed by the objects, persons, and events encountered in the pursuit of the pragmatic objectives of living. It is a 'world' in which a person is 'wide-awake', and which assert itself as the 'paramount reality' of his life."

Meaning - "The meaning of an experience is established in retrospect, through interpretations. Subjective meaning, is that meaning which a person ascribes to his own experiences and actions. Objective meaning is the meaning imputed to the conduct of another person by an observer. All human conduct appears in a subjective meaning context."

Relevance - "The importance ascribed by an individual to selected aspects, etc., of specific situations and of his activities and plans. In accordance with a person's multifarious interests and involvements, there exist various domains of relevance for him. Together, they form his system of relevances with its own priorities and preferences, not necessarily always clearly distinguished and not necessarily stable for longer periods. At any particular time, however, this system falls into specific zones of primary or minor relevances and of relative irrelevance."

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

The problem, its significance, its delimitations and limitations, its assumptions and its defined terminology have been presented in the present chapter. The remainds of the thesis is organized as follows. In chapter two an attempt is made to "contextualize," both historically and theoretically, the present problem. Chapter three provides the conceptual framework used to collect and analyse the data. In chapter four some of the methodological principles underlying the conduct of the study will be illustrated. This is followed, in chapter five, by a brief discussion of the university and its enviroment. Chapter six presents student teachers' accounts and finally, in the last chapter, the findings are outlined, implications are drawn and recommendations for further research are suggested.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The main purpose in this chapter is to try to contextualize the present problem. Unfortunately, such "contexts" are not so much given, but reflect what is perceived as relevant issues for the illustration of the given problem. It is necessary to emphasize here at the outset, that instead of focusing on the literature on teacher training, I primarily take the "immediate" context of the present problem to include theoretical and methodological arguments over the applications of "interpretive" approaches in the sociology of education, particularily since the publication of M.F.D. Young's Knowledge and Control in the early 1970's. These concerns include the repeated criticism of these early phenomenological studies, counter-arguments, reconceptualizations of problems, changes of focuses, etc., as far as they relate to the problem of the dualism between "micro" and "macro" and "structure" and "action."

However, it should be noted that the following discussion is not intended to give any details of the arguments touched upon here, merely to give the flavor of central issues in this debate and major directions.

2.1 New Sociology of Education

By the early 1970's, a school of thought stressing the significance of the content of education had formed. The concept of "new sociology of education," which became its label, points to the self-understanding of its early proponents as harbingers of a new "paradigm" in educational theorizing and research. And in line with the Kuhnian notion of a "paradigm shift," the foremost among the tactics of the proponents of this "new" approach was the drawing of exceedingly sharp lines between "old" and the "new" sociology of education. In a somewhat exaggerated way, the previous paradigm was dismissed as a "positivistic" version of structural functionalism, using "input-output model" and a "normative" orientations. And one of the more serious criticism raised against the "old" paradigm was that, in general, it took educators' definitions of "problems" given and hence neglected the task of formulating their own problems. So, by "taking as unproblematic what it is to be educated," it did "little more that produce what is often a somewhat questionable legitimacy to the various pressures for administrative and curricular 'reform'" (Young, 1971, p.2).

These interests in the sociologists and educators' presuppositions reflect the phenomenological roots of this new paradigm. Influenced by Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology, Berger and Luckmann's theory of the "social construction of reality" (1967) and Mills' sociology of

knowledge, these early proponents concluded that categories like "logical," "reasoning," "validity," etc., are necessarily sets of shared meanings of "what a good argument is, what is logical, valid, and so forth" (Young, 1971, p.5). It therefore becomes the task of the social scientist to treat such categories, not as absolutes, but as constructed realities realized in institutional contexts. While the "old" sociology of education had attached itself to the larger framework of the respected sub-disciplines of social stratification, focusing on issues like the equality of educational opportunity, the class structure of educational achievement and its relations to occupational achievement, the "new" sociology, by taking the "problems" identified by educators ("below average", "really bright," and so on) as themselves phenomena to be explained, "was no longer conceived as an area of enquiry distinct from the sociology of knowledge" (Young, 1971, p.3-5). So by making problematic the social basis of symbolic systems, the forms of their legitimation, the interpretive procedures to which they give rise, and the manner of their transmission, this new approach made the nature of <u>teachers' perspectives</u>, the symbolic forms underlying <u>classroom interactions</u>, and the <u>curricula</u>, important areas of research.

2.2 Into the Classroom

In spite of all the difficulties involved in evaluating the influences and significance of a particular "paradigm" or research approach, it can probably be argued that the most evident influence of the "new sociology" is the attention it has drawn to the symbolic systems underlying classroom interactions. Classrooms became not just places where social structural and cultural forces were played out, but situations with explanatory significance for educational outcomes (Hammersley et al., 1976). Nell Keddie's (1971) article "Classroom Knowledge," a study of teachers and pupils following a fourth-year humanities course in a large and heterogeneous comprehensive school, is an excellent example. Drawing from the works of Cicourel and Kituse (1963) and Dumont and Wax (1969), Keddie argues that explanations of educational failures must take into account both, "the defining process occuring within the school itself and...the social organization of curriculum knowledge" (p.133). So, by focusing on the "knowledge" teachers have of students and what was taken as knowledge suitable for discussion and evaluation in the classroom, Keddie sought to show how teachers' assumptions influenced their relations with pupils.

Keddie made the distinction between teachers acting in an "educationist context" and in a "teacher context;" the former being the justification given for actions from the point of view of some educational theories and the latter to

"the world of is in which teachers anticipate interaction with pupils in planning lessons, in which they act in the classroom and in which the lesson is over they usually recount or explain what has happened" (Keddie, 1971, p.135, quoted from Robinson, 1981, p.80). Keddie found that although teachers, in their educationist context, vigorously denied that ability is associated with social class, they then proceeded in concrete cases on the assumption that there is the most intimate relationship between social background and academic capacity. Teachers made comments like, "she is bright for a 'C' [low ability]," evaluating the student against criteria which the teacher felt appropriate to "C" pupils. Curriculum knowledge was also unequally distributed. Keddie found out that what "counts as knowledge" when suggested by an "A" (high ability) pupil may be dismissed as error or incomprehension in the case of "C" pupil.

In this way, Keddie seeks to show how the system of streaming that provides students with readily available labels, and teachers' "ungrounded" assumptions attached to these labels, contribute to the "differentiation of an undifferented curriculum" and the production of academic failures. Keddie concludes (1971, p.156):

> "There is between teachers and 'A' pupils a reciprocity of perspective which allows teachers to define, unchallenged by 'A' pupils, as they may be challenged by 'C' pupils, the nature and boundaries

> of what is to count as knowledge. It would seem to be the failure of high-ability pupils to question what they are taught in schools that contributes in large measure to their educational achievement."

However, in spite of the widely accepted credit given to the "new sociology" for stressing the fact that "relations in educational institutions are humanely constructed products" and a "welcome antidote to the deterministic and reifying tendencies of the 'old' sociology of education" (Karabel and Halsey, 1977, p.58), this early programme of SI/Phenomenolgical approach to classroom analysis became very soon at the heart of the debates over "interpretive" approaches in the sociology of education.

2.3 Criticism and Counter-Criticism

In spite of the boom in classroom studies which followed Young's book, new focuses, followed with a hard criticism of these early studies, began to appear. A well known article by Westbury (1973), "Conventional Classrooms, 'Open' Classroom and the Technology of Teaching," became the antecedent to many of the later directions and criticism of Young's et al. studies. In this article, Westbury sought to answer the question, How does it come that teaching techniques like "recitation," "chalk and talk," etc., in spite of being seen as rather poor pedagogical methods, continue to persist? In brief, Westbury's answer is that such formal teaching methods, like "chalk and talk," "guided

choice," "recitation," etc., often frowned upon by teacher trainees as pedagogical techniques, were not so much a matter of choice as the best pedagogical devices, but as "coping mechanisms," i.e. as devices for teachers in enabling them to satisfy their teaching goals in spite of the practical and material difficulties which they often faced in their classrooms. The "problems" Westbury particularily had in mind were various mechanical or demographic constraints, such as rooms, desks, resources, teacher/pupil ratio, and so on.

This theme was further taken up by Sharp and Green (1975) in their case study of three infant classes in Mapledene Primary School, but now more explicitly directed against these early studies of the "new sociology," particularily Keddie's article. In this study, which was conducted in a new school which had established a local reputation for its use of "progressive" methods, Sharp and Green attempted to suggest ways in which the structure of the teachers' world acts as constraints on the teachers' behavior. They found that the pressing problem faced by teachers is "what-to-do" with the flexible space and time dimensions which are provided yet with the constraints of high teacher-pupil ratios. The "solution" adopted is summarized by Sharp and Green by the concept of "busyness;" children need to be seen to be occupied, the evaluation of what they are doing becoming a secondary aspect.

Although this finding, and the study as a whole, is a valuable discussion of the process of learning within classrooms, it is their theoretical conclusions which are of specific interest. Quite reasonably, Sharp and Green ask (Keddie), whether it is "possible to conceive of the teacher, faced with material problems of classroom management, operating radically differently?" (ibid, p.13) Teachers are not free-wheeling individuals who have the freedom to "negotiate" the nature of their classroom activities, but are constrained by the traditions, expectations and power which surrounds their position. Sharp and Green argued that Keddie's failure to locate her teachers in a social, material, context is largely due to the inability of SI/phenomenology to deal with the notions of "structure" and "power," at least as an external and objective reality:

> "The basic preoccupation of the sociological phenomenologist is thus with the subtle texture of meaning which constitutes social reality. The essential idealism of the perspective becomes apparent given the focus on the knowing subject's construction of the 'external world'. Indeed, the 'external social' world is a mere subjective construction of the 'constituting consciousness'" (ibid, p.20-21).

What is needed, they argue, is a complementary theory which enables us to situate teachers' world views and practices

within the context of social and physical constraints including the unequal distribution of power as a crucial variable in the explanation of the differentiated content of consciousness, which teachers may or may not perceive but which structure their situation and set limits to their freedom and actions. Their empirical findings, that the teachers' child-centred vocabulary and accounts are "confused" and "inadequate" (p.167) and that there is a gap between words and deeds, are taken as a "demonstration" of the necessity of explaining their activity in terms of structural factors which they may not be aware of. In their view, Marxism is the approach which has the potential of "synthesizing" the meaning analysis of the phenomenological approach and more "structural" analysis.

Unfortunately, Sharp and Green do not illustrate in their study how this should be accomplished, or as Robinson (1981) put it, "one could not deduce from their work that any change in the social relations of production would influence the way in which teachers cope with classroom reality; 'problem' children would not disappear" (Robinson, 1981, p.82). A more important criticism for this debate came from David Hargreaves (1978) in his article, "Whatever Happened To Symbolic Interactionism?" In the article, Hargreaves attaches Sharp and Green's study on both theoretical and methodological grounds. On the theoretical level, Hargreaves argued that Sharp and Green present an entirely inadequate version of SI/phenomenology and on that

ground alone their attempted synthesis fails (p.10). Sharp and Green's view that interactionists are unable to cope with power and that phenomenologists naively assume that man is "free," Hargreaves calls "arrant nonsense," quoting Goffman's works to illustrate the nature of situational constraints upon action and Becker's Outsiders (1963) and Waller's Sociology of Teaching (1932) to show how interactionists have "made an important contribution to the study of power by showing how power is frequently negotiated in interpersonal encounters."

On methodological grounds, Hargreaves has serious doubts about Sharp and Green's findings. Confused or inadequate vocabulary and gap between words and deeds is nothing sociologists, especially phenomenologists, cannot expect to find. Hargreaves points out that it is the phenomenologists, rather than the marxist, who would assume as a central tenet of their perspective that accounts given in different contexts (e.g. classroom versus staffrooms) or to different audiences (e.g. teachers, headmasters, parents, researchers) would tend to vary with such situations and audiences. He also reminds Sharp and Green of the fact that it is a basic feature of common-sense knowledge that it is, in Schutz's famous words, "incoherent, only partially clear and not at all free from contradiction." In other words, a phenomenologist would expect what Sharp and Green claim to demonstrate. Yet, "the authors seem to be surprised by the findings and bring it to the reader's attention as if they

too should be surprised." (p.14)

Hargreaves furthermore points out that the few questions Sharp and Green asked available to the reader are both highly abstract and are totally decontextualized from any actual action the teacher performed and hence there are sufficient grounds for beliving that the "confusion" was partly created by the researchers:

> "By making no attempts to frame methods or questions which would permit teachers to display their cultural resources and competencies by which they make sense of their own as well as pupil conduct in the classroom, Sharp and Green are forced to present the teachers as if they are in some sense deficient; they are presented to us as culturally incompetent 'dopes'. One of the central aims and strenghts of SI/phenomenology is thereby discarded" (p.16).

This means that Sharp and Green's criticism of interpretive sociology concerning the inability to deal with "structural constraints" must be reviewed. It is on this notion that Sharp and Green rest their claim that a Marxist analysis is essential to complement the limitations of SI/phenomenology. The heart of their analysis is the view that teachers' actions are subject to a complex variety of social and physical constraints, which the teacher may or may not be aware of, or as Sharp and Green once concluded, "the teacher who has adopted the ideology of child centredness may well find himself unwittingly constrained to act" (p.viii). As

Hargreaves admits, if the teachers are not so aware, and if the consequential nature of such constraints can be demonstrated, then Sharp and Green would be correct in claiming that they have exposed one of the limitations of a SI/phenomenological analysis. But if the teachers <u>are</u> aware of the structural constraints, then Sharp and Green's attempt to expose the limitations of SI/phenomenology would fail, for their structural analysis would consist of no more than a reiteration of teachers' experience. That is, their sociological, structuralist account would consist of a re-presenation of a common-sense account (p.17).

Unfortunately, Sharp and Green give no indications that they have undertaken such checks; they simply do not bother to ask the teachers about their awareness of constraints! However, there are some indications that the teachers are indeed at least partially aware of the constraints upon them, Hargreaves continues. But when the teachers do not betray indications of such an awareness, Sharp and Green impose their <u>own</u> analysis of constraints (p.18). But this is completely unjustifiable. The fact that the teachers do not mention their awareness of certain constraints and their consequences cannot be taken as evidence that they do not have such an awareness, unless the authors have carefully probed the teachers and their understandings of constraints, which was not the case. Hargreaves concludes by saying that it is possible that what Sharp and Green claim is a sociologist's structural account is nothing more than a

common-sense member account. Their analysis does not show the limitations of a SI/phenomenological analysis as such; rather it shows how they have failed to use SI/phenomenology in all its potential (p.18).

2.4 Recent Developments

Recent developments in this debate over interpretive sociology in education have primarily attempted to "synthesize" these various trends since the early 1970's, still focusing on the notion of "strategies," but both as "purposive" and "constrained."

Peter Woods (1977) produced an important extension of Westbury's notion of "coping mechanisms" by suggesting that in many instances the pressures on teachers is such that their instructional goals begin to take second place to a concern with personal "survival" (Pollard, 1982, p.19). Among such "survival strategies" Woods identified what he called "domination," "negotiation," "socialization," "fraternization," "absence and removal," "ritual and routine," "occupational therapy" and "morale boosting." And in line with the symbolic interactionist's concern with the notion of "self," Woods (1977, p.275) contended that:

> "what is at risk is not only (the teachers') physical, mental and nervous safety and well-being, but also his continuance in professional life, his future prospects, his professional identity, his way of life, his status, his self-esteem."

Since 1977, Andy Hargreaves (1977, 1978, 1979) has, as Woods (1980) acknowledges, taken the analysis considerably further, particularily with respect to the "external context" surrounding the classroom. Hargreaves suggests that new teaching methods are "creative acts" by teachers but they are as well "responses" to "institutionalized mediated constraints," which are externally determined at a societal level. In this way, teachers' strategies are seen as a "crucial linch pin in the wheel of casuality that connects structural features of the society to interactional patterns in the classroom and back again, thereby reproducing those structural arrangements" (Hargreaves, 1978, p.75).

Hargreaves (1978) summarized several general characteristics of coping strategies: first, they refer to general definitions of teaching behavior which cannot be "reduced to a simple set of alternative teaching and control techniques" (p.77), and are also based upon a set of "tacitly accepted and taken for granted assumptions about schooling, children and learning" (p.94); second, they are responses to societal constraints, including "contradictory goals of the education system," "material resources" such as buildings and class-size, and "differing educational ideologies;" third, they are institutionally mediated, meaning that the same societal constraints will be expressed differently in different kinds of educational institutions, a notion which is helpful to relate features of the society to issues in the classroom without "reducing statements

about structure to statements about actions" (p.89); and finally, whether coping strategies persist or become institutionalized depends partly upon the response of pupils, and that the claimed effectiveness of coping strategies (and hence the grounds for their institutionalization) are "ultimately validated in teacher 'experience'" (p.93).

In the last few years, various authors, Pollard (1980, 1982), Denscombe (1980a, 1980b, 1982), D. Hargreaves (1980), Stebbins (1977, 1979), have joined this discussion, providing both further theoretical elaboration of this notion of "strategies" and several empirical demonstrations of its use.

Pollard (1982), for example, has attempted to refine Hargreaves' model of coping strategies by incorporating Anthony Giddens' notion of "duality of structure and action" to the model and to enrich the model on the micro level. Hargreaves' macro-contextualization of coping strategies, according to Pollard, tends to leave the influence of micro-social factors unexplored and makes coping strategies appear as the product of individual teachers adapting alone to experienced constraints (p.22). What is missed, Pollard argues, is the influence of the children in interaction in the classroom, the teacher culture and the institutional bias. But first of all, Pollard (1982, p.21) argues, we need to contextualize teachers themselves, as well as the roles which they occupy, by focusing on their situationally

specific perspectives, their goals and their interests.

2.5 Conclusion

We have seen how the notions of "coping strategies" and "awareness of social and material constraints" have become central concepts in the attempt to overcome some of the traditional dilemmas involved in the explanation of human behavior, particularily as it relates to teachers, i.e. to account both for the "active" or "purposive" but also the "determined" or "constrained" elements in human behavior.

Although this debate discussed here has exclusively focused on established teachers there is some evidence that these central questions could fruitfully be applied to student teachers' reality as well. It is, however, assumed that to conduct such a study we need to incorporate these concepts into a more general model of social actors.

Hence, in the next chapter I will try to come up with a model, or conceptual framework, which presents student teachers' activity as both "purposive" and "constrained" by focusing on their definitions of teaching behavior, both as a "creative act," but which take situational constraints into what is seen as possible and appropriate course of actions.

Chapter 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Earlier in the thesis it was indicated that the basic theoretical foundations of the present study were sought in the various interpretive approaches. It was furthermore suggested that the most urgent task of interpretive sociology was to provide a framework which would cut across the "macro" and "micro," "structure" and "action," dichotomies so prevalent in the sociological literature. And in line with interpretive sociology it was argued that such a task had, on the one hand, to take account of the "subjective" or "intersubjective" aspects of social action, i.e. to be "grounded" in Glazer and Strauss' sense in the lifeworld of the social actors under study, but on the other hand it had to try to meet the requirements of "objective" science as far as possible, i.e. of presenting social actors' situated meanings in a form subject to intersubjective check and control.[4] Unfortunately, there does not, in my view, exist at present time any empirical studies on student teachers, with the possible exception of Lacey's (1977) study of student teachers at the University

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[4] It should be noted here that the writer's conception of objectivity is similar to Schutz and Berger's. As Peter Berger (1981, p.49) puts it, "objectivity, then, does not mean that the sociologist reports on "raw facts" that are "out there" in and of themselves. Rather, objectivity means that the sociologists conceptual scheme is in a dialectical relationship with the empirical data.

of Sussex, which have developed a relevant theoretical framework for the present problem. Almost all the studies which are found of any significance for the present purpose deal with established teachers or other categories of students. However, it is my belief that these studies are of such a general nature that they are easily applicable to the present field of study.

Most of the related studies seem to follow a similar path in their approach. They usually set out to study teachers' everyday activities in terms of some given concept, such as "Survival Strategies" (Woods, 1977), "Membership Competence" (Denscombe, 1980), "Coping Strategies" (Westbury, 1973; Sharp and Green, 1975; A. Hargreaves, 1978), "Occupational Culture" (Hargreaves, 1980), "Interest-at-hand" (Pollard, 1980) or "Definition of the Situation" (Stebbins, 1977, 1981). However, as these authors proceed, many or all of the other terms associated with this approach are incorporated into the framework and the primary significance of the initial concept is somewhat lost. While this may serve some organizational purpose, it is the writer's view that all these concepts are necessary for the theoretical purpose these studies are aiming at. Furthermore, it is the writer's view that the notion underlying all these approaches is found in Thomas's "definition of the situation." Or as Delamont (1976) puts it:

"Whilst there are divergences between the various

> schools of interpretive sociology there have been methodological convergences. All in similar ways lay stress on the study of everyday life and on actors' own interpretations and definitions of the situation; social order is seen as the accomplishment of actors through their interaction; social life is thought of as a process" (quoted from Stebbins, 1981, p.243).

While the importance of the actor's definition of the situation is recognized by all parties, there certainly exist various theoretical and methodological disagreements over substantial issues between these approaches. In a somewhat exaggerated way we may say that symbolic interactionists, armed with their notion of "social self," "identity," etc., treat the notion of definition of the situation as a central concept in a sociological theory of motivation; phenomenologists tend to focus on the "construction" of the social world through reorganized and negotiated definitions, while the ethnomethodological branch of phenomenology attempts to avoid as far as possible the notion of "consciousness" and focuses instead on "frames" underlying everyday definitions of the situation, cultural systems of categories and rules governing the creation and communication of meanings, or what it takes to become a "competent" member of a group.[5] In spite of such differences

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[5]For further discussion of these differences between symbolic interactionism, social phenomenology and ethnomethodology, see Stebbins (1981).

it will be assumed here that these schools of thought have enough in common to legitimate a "fusion of horizons," i.e. a framework which makes use of concepts taken from these different contexts. Accordingly, my conceptual framework will consist of few "themes," taken from the above schools of thought, which have been used in studying the everyday activities of teachers and student teachers. I will begin with the most specific concept, that is the notion of "Coping Strategies," followed by more abstract concepts like "Perspective," "Culture," "Membership Competence," "Basic vs. Surface Rules," and "Sense for Social Structure."

3.2 Coping Strategies

How are we to understand the ideas and actions of student teachers as they get close to the end of their training program? Are their orientations guided by theoretical principles acquired at the University or by practical principles acquired in the schools? By ideological meanings acquired at the University or ungrounded assumptions received from the co-operating teachers? Or maybe none of these? Are their plans of actions perhaps guided by the knowledge of teaching they have developed as pupils through their former educational life as Lortie (1975) has argued? Whatever is the case, and this is primarily an empirical question, we should expect that student teachers attempt to define the situations in a way which makes it possible for them to enter the teaching

profession with as much ease as possible. There are probably, for example, many things students "know" about teaching: about the schools; teachers; pupils; pedagogy; etc., which are seen as having important practical implications for how to do the job.

In the last chapter we saw that the notion of coping strategies was an attempt by sociologists of education to link structural questions to interactionist concerns by characterizing teaching methods as "constructive", or "meaningful" responses of teachers to "institutionalized mediated constraints." We can recall that the underlying question was "why" teachers adopted such teaching techniques as "recitation," "chalk and talk," "guided choice," "busyness," and so forth. The explanation was usually found in various "material" and "ideological" constraints upon teachers: Jackson (1968) had emphasized the "immediacy" and "fastness" of the classroom life; Westbury (1973) the "material arrangements" of the classrooms and the "number of pupils;" to this Sharp and Green (1975) added "political and ideological expectations;" Woods (1977) saw the contradictions between teacher's commitments and the changing nature of the teacher's work increasing; and Andy Hargreaves (1978) saw "conflicting educational ideologies," "contradictions within the educational system" and "material resources" as crucial in this respect.

At the outset it is important to emphasize this dual nature of coping strategies; as "strategies" they refer to

their "intentional" and "creative" elements; but as "coping" they refer to their "adaptive" nature, i.e. the idea that there are structural limits to the variety of styles in the classroom.

But now the question arises, how can these ideas fruitfully be applied to the study of student teachers? What are the problems student teachers are coping with? In what terms and with what kinds of strategies in mind do they think about the task of teaching itself, about instruction, pupils, and so forth? Keeping Pollard's point in mind, we need to focus on student teachers themselves, their situationally specific perspectives, their goals and their interests, not merely some abstract "roles" they supposedly "play." For that purpose, Lacey's study (1977) on student teachers at the University of Sussex, can give some directions.

Colin Lacey made the concept of "social strategy," his refinement of Becker's "situated adjustment," his central concept in understanding the educational life of student teachers. In essence, Lacey's definition of the concept corresponds to our notion of coping strategies:

> "The term 'strategy' is appropriate because it implies a purposive, guiding, autonomous element, within individual and group behavior. It is clear that the uniformities in human behavior, which give rise to recognizable patterns in research, indicate that individual social strategies for the most part

> comply with or are modified by constraining social forces. The implication here is that the constraints of the situation and the individual's purposes within that situation must be taken into account." (Lacey, 1977, p.67)

And in similar way as Becker et al. (1961), in their study of medical students, Lacey attempted to identify those problems and worries which dominate student teachers' lives and their responses to these problems. He described the "collectivizing" strategies which students tend to use in the university context, sharing their teaching problems with peers and tutors, gaining support from the knowledge that these problems are not unique to them, and gaining recognition from tutors for their ability to conceptualize classroom realities. He contrasts these strategies with the "privatizing" strategies which students tend to use in the school context, keeping their problems to themselves as to avoid being judged as incompetent. Typical problems included classrooms problems such as "control" issues and "getting through to the pupils," and problems of providing plausible interpretations of teaching specific to each context. Typical solutions consisted of "searching for material," exchanging "ideas that worked," "blaming the system or the child," and "differentiate" between the university and the schools, or as one of Lacey's students said, "I agreed with E-tutors in principle and with teacher-tutors in practice." (Lacey, 1977, p.95)

Lacey clearly recognized that student teachers' definitions of the situation consisted of various elements, their own and others, and that actions and ideas were somehow linked in what he called "perspective" or "culture." However, these terms are not analyzed carefully enough to illustrate, for example, what the significance of "getting through to the pupils" is or in what sense "blaming" is a strategy. This, I believe, is mostly due to inadequacies in Becker's et al. theoretical model in which Lacey's study is grounded. Becker et al. (1961, p.34) defined "perspective" as:

> "co-ordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situations, to refer to a person's ordinary way of thinking and feeling about acting in such a situation. These thoughts and actions are co-ordinated in the sense that the actions flow reasonably, from the actor's point of view, from the ideas contained in the perspective."

And accordingly, "group perspectives" was defined as "perspectives held collectively by a group of people" (Becker et al., 1961, p.33).

The main problem with this model appears when we ask what it means that actions "flow reasonably" from a perspective? In what sense does an actor "use" a perspective? Is that a conscious act? Or, how does the individual, or the sociologist, recognize "ordinary" and

"problematic" situations? In my view, neither Becker nor Lacey give any satisfactory answers to such questions. To answer these and other similar questions about the function of meanings in social interactions, I think that a more phenomenological approach is needed. Alfred Schutz's phenomenology of everyday life is primarily oriented towards such an analysis and has, in my view, the potential to explain more adequately how "perspectives," "situations," and "actions" are interrelated. But first of all, Becker's notion of "perspective" has to be broken into several, logically related, concepts for analytical purposes.

3.3 Perspective

For analytical proposes the concept of perspective will be broken into three interrelated sub-concepts, i.e. "interpretive schemes," "interest-at-hand," and "culture."

3.3.1 Interpretive Schemes

At the heart of Schutz's social phenomenology is the view that all human conduct appear in a subjective meaning context. Schutz's social actor is primarily a practical social theorist, who by applying "typical" knowledge in "typified" situations is able to come to terms with reality. In any face-to-face interaction the actor brings to the relationship a "stock of knowledge at hand," consisting of various social typifications, in terms of which he constructs "typical" patterns of the Other's motives, goals,

attitudes or personality, of which his actual behavior is just an example (Schutz, 1963, p.244). But not only does the individual's stock of knowledge furnish him with means of coming to terms with fellow-men in face-to-face interactions, but as well with various kinds of knowledge, and recipes of all sorts; for dealing with situations; for handling and manipulating things; understanding persons we have never met; in short, knowledge of various types in order to apply in typical situations to get typical results. This idea, I belive, is at the bottom at Lacey's "action-ideas matrix" and Becker's notion of "ordinary situations."

So, in terms of common-sense thinking in everyday life, men have knowledge of these various dimensions of the social world in which they live. Needless to say, such knowledge is not only fragmentary since it is restricted to specific sectors of this world, it is also frequently inconsistent in itself and shows all degrees of clarity, distinctness and precision (Schutz, 1963, p.314). Yet, in spite of all these inadequacies, common-sense knowledge of everyday life is sufficient, <u>for all practical purposes</u>, for coming to terms with fellow-men, social institutions, etc., and is thus continously confirmed in the course of our experience, in circumstances both trivial and important.

The explanation of this relative "success" of our common-sense knowledge for coming to terms with social reality lies, according to Schutz, in the fact that our

common-sense knowledge is socialized in various ways. Most importantly, only a small part of it originates within our own personal experience, the greater part is socially derived, "handed down to me by my friends, my parents, my teachers and the teachers of my teachers" (Schutz, 1963, p.313). So, from the outset the world is not my private world, but an intersubjective world of culture:

> "It is intersubjective because we live in it as men among other men, bound to them through common influence and work, understanding others and being understood by them. It is a world of culture because, from the outset, the world of everyday life is a universe of significance to us, that is, a texture of meaning which we have to interpret in order to find our bearings within it and come to terms with it." (Schutz, 1963, p.309)‘

This socialized nature of our knowledge is the very basis upon which most interactions are accomplished. It allows social actors to assume what Schutz calls "reciprocity of perspectives", i.e. the assumption that in spite of different biographical situations, we share a common-sense about the nature of the world. In everyday interactions we

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‘ As G.H. Mead had emphasized, and Schutz repeated, the typifying medium par exellence by which socially derived knowledge is transmitted is the vocabulary and the syntax of everyday language. So, growing into our world and into our society, we acquire a certain language which embodies various interpretations and typifications of reality, "proper" typifications from the point of the in-group, as well as a number of "recipes" for coming to terms with the social life we participate.

assume (over and above such things that the Other is an intelligent being and understands my language) that things have similar meanings to us, that we typify the world in similar ways, in short, that our actions and talk refer to the same "background" knowledge which makes sense of what we actually do and say:

> "In recurrent and well-organized situations men are able to act together with relative ease because they share common understanding as to what each person is supposed to do. Cooperation is facilitated when men take the same things for granted." (Cicourel, 1970, p.29)

So according to this view presented here, the very conditions for social interactions are the social actors' application of "mutual knowledge", or the application of learned "interpretive schemes" whereby contexts of communication are created and sustained and which are taken for granted as "adequate" until further notice. In this sense, even the most mundane forms of everyday conduct can properly be called "purposive" or "intentional." However, as Giddens points out, these terms should not be equated with <u>consciously held in mind</u> orientations, which social actors could state in abstract form is asked. Rather, these terms should refer to the ability of "practical reasoning", that is, the ability to apply <u>relevant knowledge</u> in typified situations in order to produce a particular outcome or series of outcomes (Giddens, 1982, p.76).

3.3.2 Interests-at-Hand

When it comes to understanding how perspectives emerge, Schutz's concept of interest-at-hand is instrumental in going beyond the simple notion that perspectives are merely "responses" to structural arrangements. That, in itself, is both too "materialistic" and does not count for rival definitions of the same situation.

According to the phenomenological theory of experience, the world is from the outset experienced in the pre-scientific thinking of everyday life in the mode of typicality; which carries with it a horizon of possible experiences with corresponding references to familarity and pre-acquantainceship (ibid, p.243). In other words, the world is experienced, not as an arrangement of individual unique objects, but as "mountains," "trees," "animals," "fellow-men," etc., i.e. as types:

> "If we see a dog, that is, if we recognize an object as being an animal and more precisely as a dog, we anticipate a certain behavior on the part of this dog, a typical (not individual) way of eating, or running, or playing, of jumping, and so on. Actually we do not see his teeth, but having experienced before what a dog's teeth typically look like, we may expect that the teeth of the dog before us will show the same typical features though with individual modifications." (Schutz, 1971, p.116)

Now, and this seems to be of special importance, I do not

need by any means to perceive of the concrete dog as just an example of the general concept of a "dog." Depending on my interests or purpose-at-hand, I could either have distinguished the dog from all other dogs in the world as my friend and companion and ignored all considerations about "typical" characteristics. Or, as an "expert," I could have conceived the dog as a rare type of a more specific kind. In other words, which traits or qualities of a given object or event I consider as individually unique and which typical, depends on my actual interest and the system of relevances involved, i.e. upon the practical and theoretical problems-at-hand (ibid, p.243).

In terms of "defining the situation," this means that what is formulated, communicated or understood, is only a fraction of what could be noticed. In general, those elements are singled out which serve to define the situation in the light of the present purpose at hand. However, some factors present in the situation "impose" themselves upon the actor and thus constitute what Schutz (1971, p.114) called imposed relevances:

> "Imposed upon us as relevant are situations and events which are not connected with interests chosen by us, which do not originate in acts of our discretion, and which we have to take just as they are, without any power to modify them by our spontaneous activities except by transforming the relevances thus imposed into intrinsic relevances."

This notion of "imposed relevance" is of crucial importance to the theory of definition of the situation and for interpretive sociology in general. This aspect of SI/phenomenological sociology is clearly bypassed by Sharp and Green in their criticism of interpretive sociology. But in this sense, teachers or student teachers' definitions of the situation are likely to contain both "imposed relevances" such as number of pupils, lack of material resources, etc., but also elements reflecting their conceived goals and interests, abstract as well as specific.

3.3.3 Culture

So far we have spoken of the problem of "defining the situation" in very abstract way and merely in terms of individuals' relevances. But as Schutz remarked, the most important element in the definition of the private situation is, however, the fact that the individual finds himself always a member of numerous social groups (Schutz, 1970, p.84). This means that there is no such thing as an isolated "interest-at-hand," merely a complex system of interests, heterogeneous, and necessarily in a context with the group interests. In the vocabulary of the Symbolic Interactionism, all the different "roles" each individual plays carries with it certain "interests," often in conflict with each other.

So, interests-at-hand are both socialized and reflect our biographically determined situation.[7]

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[7] Schutz (1963, p.308-9) defined man's "biographically determined situation" as "a physical and socio-cultural

And whether they originate in our "existential" group, i.e. the group to which I was born and with which I share a common social heritage, or so-called "voluntary" groups, i.e. groups which I join later in life or I form, the socially approved system of typifications and relevances within each group help to define and select the elements within each "typical" situation which are seen as "natural" or "appropriate" for a given purpose. Schutz summarizes this idea in the following words:

> "So we are not only taught to define the enviroment (that is the typical feature of the relative natural aspects of the world prevailing in the in-group as the unquestioned but always questionable sum totals of things taken for granted until further notice), but also how typical constructs have to be formed in accordance with the system of relevances accepted from the anonymous unified point of view of the in-group." (Schutz, 1963, p.313)

This conclusion points to the cultural or group influences on any definition of situations and to potential conflicts within any definition. In the case of student teachers, we could expect to find, because of their "dual citizenship," i.e. their participation in the University and school cultures, conflicting definitions of teaching, offering different solutions to the problems or even identifying

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'(cont'd)enviroment as defined by him, within which he has his positions, not merely his position in terms of physical space and outer time or of his status and role within the social system but also his moral and ideological position."

different situations as problematic. But as said before, how they manage to "solve" or "mediate" between such conflicting definitions is primarily an empirical question.

3.4 Competent Membership

Our discussion so far has revealed two important points: (a) that interactions are accomplished through participation in a shared "frame of reference" or what Giddens (1982) calls "mutual knowledge" of social actors; and (b) that what is supposed to be known in common to everyone who share a system of relevances is the way of life considered to be "natural," "appropriate" or "good," by members of the in-group, and as such, it is at the origin of the many recipes for handling things and men in order to come to terms with typified situations. It is clear that implicit in such an analysis is the concept of social competence. As Schutz illustrated clearly in the Stranger (1970), social competence, as the ability to see the world in terms of the groups' relevances and act accordingly, is not easily acquired but requires a process of adaptation or socialization.[1]

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[1] For those who have grown up within the cultural pattern of the group, the recipes and their application are usually an unquestioned "matter of course" which gives them both security and assurance. But for the approaching stranger, who has not brought within his grasp the whole system of the cultural pattern and relevances of the group, the pattern of the approached group does not guarantee an objective chance for success but rather a pure subjective liklelihood which has to be checked step by step (Schutz, 1970, p.92).

In this way, "social competence" or "membership competence" refers both to interpretive ability, i.e. the ability to recognise a situation as of a particular type and as warranting a course of action deemed appropriate amongst the community, but also the ability to implement the appropriate course of action under certain circumstances.' Hence, it has been argued (Denscombe, 1980), that the concept of competence is particularily suitable for organizational analysis, or analysis of all kinds of routine and practical activity. For one thing, official membership of an organization does not guarantee competence, nor does knowledge of the formal structure of the organization provide the individual with the appropriate skills or knowledge which is necessary for competence. As Denscombe points out, it is not the official prescriptions which explains the activity of competent members but how they interpret situations, how they use the rules, bend, neglect or invoke them, which usually requires practice. For this reason, we can expect that student teachers suffer from what has become known as "competence anxiety," i.e. the feeling of being judged as incompetent in coping, in a professional manner, with the situations, including coping with control issues and providing appropriate interpretations of objects

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' The notion of "competence" as used here is also found in linguistics, in Chomsky's (1965) concept of "linguistic competence," but expecially in Hymes' (1972) notion of "communicative competence." But whereas in socio-linguistics the concept refers primarily to knowledge of language itself (vocabulary, grammar, and so on), and of the cultural rules regarding its use, here it refers more generally to being "good" or "adequate" at something.

and events.

3.4.1 Basic vs. Surface Rules

Denscombe's suggestions reflect Cicourel's earlier critisicm of the use of concepts like "role" and "status" in sociological analysis (Cicourel, 1970). In spite of extensive use of concepts like "role" and "status" in the sociological literature, it is often not at all clear in what way these concepts are relevant, either for the actors themselves or the observer's understanding of the action scene he seeks to describe (ibid, p.8). The general problem with these concepts is, as Cicourel continues, that we know very little about how persons establish "statuses" and "roles" in everyday social interactions. And in spite of many attemts to underpin these concepts with reference to norms and expectations, the presumed conformity or nonconformity of actors to norms raises the question, which Denscombe raised, of how does the actor decide what "norms" are operative and relevant, and how does some group or community (or its representatives) decide that actors are "deviant?" (ibid, p.8). Without a model of the actor that specifies procedures which allows the actor to make such decisions, we cannot reveal how behavioral displays are recognized as "role taking" or "role making":

> "The actor must be endowed with mechanisms or basic rules that permit him to identify settings that would lead to "approppiate" invocation of norms,

> where norms would be surface rules and not basic to how the actor makes inferences about taking or making roles." (ibid, p.24)

Basic rules, or interpretive procedures, thus permit the actor to locate emergent meanings of a particular action scene within the wider context of a larger set of meanings, of general rules and policies. Role-taking and role-making thus require that the actor acticulates or negotiates general rules or norms within constructed action scene in order to find the meaning of one's own behavior or that of some other.

This notion of social competence as the ability to "make sense" of situated meanings by locating them within a much larger set of meanings, to take, for example, what is said as an "index to" or "document of" a wider context of meanings (and vice versa), has proved to be particulary fruitful for analysing classroom interactions (Cicourel, 1974; Mehan, 1974, 1978; Hargreaves et al., 1975; Edwards & Furlong, 1978; Woods 1977). Hargreaves, for example, shows how the notion of competence can be profitably applied to deviance in the classroom, which is the violation of the rules in force there. As Stebbins (1981, p.259) summarizes:

> "Deviance, Hargreaves et al. (1975, p.55) point out, hinges on imputations made by teacher about the behavior of one or more pupils. The meaning of these imputations depends on teachers and pupils' competent understanding of the rules appropriate to

> the situation in which the infraction takes place and of the events preceding that infraction. These rules are generally beyond the participants' awareness; they are assumed to be operating in certain contexts."

Of particular interest to us in this respect are student teachers' "documentary" definitions of teaching, of classrooms and other aspects of school life. While any such definition of a situation is certainly the outcome of complex processes of taken for granted understanding of what classrooms _are_, of interplay between meanings and power, of negotiations over "working consensus," etc., most of the time, acquiring social competence takes place through discourse. If not for other reasons than that language is the primary medium of _intersubjectivity_, i.e. shared meanings, conversational analysis seems to be an important aspect of our investigation of how student teachers come to a shared definitions of situations, how they formulate their actions, "repair" one's another misunderstandings, and so forth.

3.5 Sense for Social Structure

One of the central concerns of this thesis is the student teachers' _sense for social structure_, i.e. their conceptions of structural and cultural arrangements. In more general terms, this is related to the question of how social structures influence human behavior and provide the

boundaries for their possible interpretations of the world. It should be emphasized, in spite of repeated criticism of social phenomenology in this respect, that "structural" analysis is nothing foreign to interpretive sociology. On the contrary, it is for example one of its fundamental assumptions that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs. But on the other hand, it tries to avoid unnecessary reifications of structures, such as giving social structures an objective and independent existence separated from the social context in which they are supposedly observed through "indicators," or seeing them merely in purely behavioral terms, such as simply given "probability" of certain events to occur.

3.5.1 Structuration

Ethnomethodologists have always been particularily interested in the processes underlying the creation of "objective social facts," i.e. the interactional work that assemble social structures (Mehan, 1978, p.32). If we try to understand social life in terms of concrete individuals, living and acting together, the problem of how "structure" influences "actions" is probably better stated in terms of how social structure is reproduced in every social encounter. Taking this point of departure, i.e. in seeing the production of social life in terms of "reproduced practices," and seeing the constitution of society as a skilled accomplishment of its members, Anthony Giddens

(1982) made the concept of structuration the basic concept for inquiring into the relationship between "structures" and "actions." To study "structuration" then, is, as Giddens puts it, to "attempt to determine the condition which govern the continuity and dissolutions of structures or types of structures (1982, p.120).

Giddens argues that the study of structuration has three basic elements or conditions: the study of the role of meanings, power, and norms in the production of interactions. This enables us, given a reconceptualization of "structures," from that of merely meaning "patterns of social relationships," to that of including rules and resources in social interactions (Giddens, 1982, p.131), to show how the concept of "competence" is highly relevant for any "structural" analysis. "Competence" and "social structure" are thus related in the following way:

> "The basic rules or interpretive procedures are like deep structural grammatical rules: they enable the actor to generate appropriate (usually innovative) responses in changing situational settings. The interpretive procedure enable the actor to sustain a sense of social structure over the course of changing social settings." (Cicourel, 1970, p.24)

This is not to say that social structures are nothing but a person's sense for that structure, but rather that "competence", as the ability to apply relevant knowledge in typical situations, presupposes a fairly good knowledge of

social life or sense for social structure. Such a "sense for social structure," as Garfinkel (1967, p.76) puts it, includes knowledge of the conduct of family life, market organization, distribution of honor, competence, responsibility, motives among members, frequency, changes of, and remedies for trouble, and so on.

3.5.2 Duality of Structures

We have looked at how "knowledge," in the form of interpretive procedures, "competence," and "social structure" are interrelated. A further illustration of these relationships is found in Giddens' notion of duality of structures, by which he means that structures are both "constitutive by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution" (1982, p.121). This idea can be explained in the following way. The communication of meaning in interaction involves the use of interpretive schemes by means of which sense is made by participants of what each says and does. The application of such cognitive schemes, within a framework of "mutual knowledge," depends and draws from a "cognitive order" which is shared by a group or community. But while drawing upon such a cognitive order the application of interpretive schemes at the same time reconstitutes that order. In other words, structures are not merely "constraining" but "enabling" as well.

An excellent empirical illustration of this model, applied to classroom interaction, is provided by Edwards and Furlong (1978). Their study shows that in conversational interactions in which pupils and teacher engage in classroom, the participants both make reference to their sense of structure and, by orienting to this sense as a resource for the organization of their everyday interaction as is managed in their talk, reproduce this structure in a way which both enables and constrains their interaction. Or in their own words, "Both 'sides' use their structural relationship as a basis for expressing and assigning meaning, and in doing so they reconstitute that relationship" (1978, p.152). Included in this "sense for social structure" was both parties' knowledge of the unequal distribution of power in the classroom. Edward and Furlong showed that in orderly classrooms, teachers rarely make their power obvious. But almost all their talk, and their pupils' as well, assumes their authority. So the construction of particular ways of working was supported by a framework of traditional teacher-pupil relationships which did not need to be spelled out. The details were what needed to be said. Other, more general, information about classroom life was not transmitted explicitly; it was assumed that pupils would make sense of what was said because they would fit it into their general understanding of what classrooms are like (ibid, p.93).

3.6 Summary

So far I have attempted to present a conceptual framework, or model, intended to investigate particular aspects of student teachers' lifeworld. Social actors, in this case student teachers, are presented as practical social theorists, attempting to make sense of the various aspects of school life in order to find their bearings within it and come to terms with it. This includes acquiring "knowledge" of the structural and cultural aspects of schools, of pupils, of possibilities and limitations of instruction, and of various situationally specific meanings.

Theoretically, this has been approached in terms of the theory of definition of the situation, analysed more specifically in terms of "interpretive schemes," "interest-at-hand," "culture," "membership competence," and "sense for social structure." In essence, "practical theorizing" refers to the application of "relevant" knowledge in different situations and the ability to interpret objects and events in an "appropriate" manner. Hence, it is part of the normal competence of students to shift between such "provinces of meanings." This does not have to mean that such "shifts" are always a conscious act on students' behalf, in everyday life such shifts usually take place in an unforced and routine way. It will be expected, however, because of the conflicting definitions of the situation we can expect students to be faced with, that in their "problematic" situation students are relatively

well aware of such shifts.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

One of the basic characteristics of the phenomenological approach is the attempt to minimize the methodological dualism between "theory" and "methodology" (Filmer et al., 1972). This, along with their concerns with the social actors' lived experience, has made social phenomenologists particularily aware of their methodological presuppositions and their conceptualization of the social world. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe a careful method by which social scientists can, in order to avoid irrelevant categories or variables, "ground" their theory and research in the reality they are studying. They describe the advantages of their open approach over a pre-structured study in the following words:

> "The consequences (of the traditional approach) is often a forcing of data as well as a neglect of relevant concepts and hypotheses that may emerge...Our approach, allowing substantive concepts and hypotheses to emerge first, on their own, enables the analyst to ascertain which, if any, existing formal theory may help him generate his substantive theories. He can then be more objective and less theoretically biased." (quoted from Wilson, 1977, p.251)

Such an approach has various theoretical and methodological implications for social research. For the first, there is a

constant dialectic between the data collection and the analysis, which means that the conceptual framework is always subject to revision as the data is collected and the researcher must always be ready to accept a kind of data he might not have expected. The following diagram, taken from R. Rist (1982), illustrates this reciprocal relationship between data analysis and data collection.

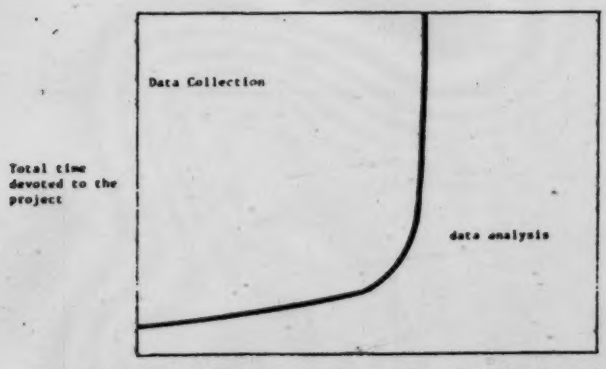

Fig. 1. Relationship between data collection and data analysis in conducting qualitative research. (Source: Lofland, 1971, p. 118)

Secondly, the notion of "grounded" theory has definitely various implications for data-collection techniques. Although a given theoretical "paradigm," or research approach, does not <u>logically</u> determine certain data-collection techniques (Reichardt & Cook, 1979), social phenomenologists tend to adopt some kind of qualitative and ethnographic procedures; participant observation, observation, interviewing, or documentary research. As the above reference indicates, the point is to "get close" to the data, and to discover and interpret the <u>meaning-structure</u> of the reality under study.

One important implication of this is the necessity of describing as far as possible the conditions under which data is selected, presented and analysed. Hence, the following discussion is intended to describe some of the main stages in the conduct of the present study, focusing on the issues of "gaining entry," "collection and presentation of data," and the "analysis."

4.1 Gaining Entry

In the literature on ethnographic research, the problem of "gaining entry" is seen as of crucial importance (Baily, 1982; Rist, 1982). First, it is self-evident that there will be no fieldwork if one is not in the field, but given the permission to do the work where that is needed as is the case in most institutional or organizational settings, the quality of the study often depends upon the "kind of person" the researcher turns out to be in the eyes of the respondents:

> "A person becomes accepted as a participant more because of the kind of person he turns out to be in the eyes of the field contacts than because of what the research represents to them. Field contacts want to be reassured that the research worker is a 'good guy' and can be trusted not to 'do them dirt' with what he finds out." (J.P. Dean 1954, quoted in Cicourel, 1964, p.42)

In my case, I began by contacting a teacher within the

university with whom I was acquainted and who was able to give me some advice concerning the best way to proceed. After speaking to the assistant headmaster I got a list of third year student teachers and a permission to conduct the study in whatever way I chose, given the willingness of student teachers to participate.'* Almost all of the students I contacted were willing to participate in several group discussions and private interviews or to allow me to tape-record their "formal" meetings. From the outset, I made it clear to all the students who participated in the study that my primary interest was to study their views and evaluation of the teaching practicum, primarily as they themselves discussed it in their own group. Fortunately, it looked as if they were not particularily upset about the idea of participating, saying that they were "used to talking about it, both in their own group and with others."

4.2 Collection and Presentation of the Data

In the study I made use of several data-collection techniques: Observation, participant observation, formal and informal interviewing, ethnographic "note taking," and the questionnaire. The data were collected over a three month period, from January to the end of March, 1983. Eight students volunteered for an active participation in the research, both for individual interviews and for several group discussions and two group-discussions, in which about

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'* At that time the president of the University was on leave and was subtituted by the assistant president.

20 students in each group came together to discuss their most recent student teaching, were audio-taped. Considerable time was spent in observing, listening and talking to student teachers, in various circumstances. The writer participated in their daily discussions and activities and went to classes with them on occation. After a preliminary analysis of their accounts, a questionnaire was designed to check the internal validity of the findings was given to the students at the end of the period. About 50 per cent of the population answered the questionnaire. Finally, the assistant president was interviewed and numerous documents investigated.

In the process of the data collection the issue of validity played an important role. In order to avoid too abstract and idealistic responses from the students, i.e. to get at their <u>situated meanings</u>, two things were done. First, questions in interviews and group discussions were kept very unstructured, allowing students to express their own views and interests, and secondly, the overall focus of the study was on student teachers' experience in their teaching practicum; their plans, difficulties, evaluations, rationales, vocabulary, and so on. This strategy was based on the conviction that abstract and idealistic questions create abstract and idealistic response. Whereas I wanted to focus on their everyday meanings and how they were transmitted and discussed in <u>their</u> group, it was important to get them to talk about their everyday activity instead of

a highly rationalized view of teaching.''

The study is also selective in more than one sense. First, I looked for matters that were important to the participants in a collective way. I concentrated less on the variations in attitudes to be found among students than what was common to them although variations which were seen as significant to them were noticed, primarily to locate the boundaries of their shared definitions. Secondly, the research problem itself acts selectively upon what was focused on. Many things which were seen as irrelevant to the main objectives of the study were left unnoticed. This necessarily involves certain interpretive procedures on the part of the researcher which remain hidden, in so far as these procedures are not specified to the reader, by the "conceptual framework." While this fact has become common ground for criticising many qualitative studies (Mehan, 1982), I believe that this problem is not at all peculiar to ethnographic and other qualitative studies but is found in all social research, and not least in the process of "coding" questionnaire responses into the "right" categories.

What is actually presented in the thesis are extracts from the audiotape data and my fieldnotes. The data quoted are the data which I usually found the most "typical" for the collective views on the matter. In addition, some percentage figures, taken from the questionnaire, will be

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'' For the importance of this strategy, see Hargreaves' (1978) criticism of Sharp and Green discussed in chapter 2.

included in the text.'[1]

4.3 Analysis

As indicated before, the phenomenological approach attempts to reveal the meaning structure of social actors' lifeworld, and how these meanings influence their actions. And although my "conceptual framework" is intended to draw attention to specific aspects of student teachers' reality and guide the analysis of their accounts, thus imposing additional structure upon their own, its function is not to "correct" their accounts or present the <u>true</u> meaning of their attitudes. Their views are necessarily organized around <u>their</u> relevances: their interests, purposes and problems, so by locating their meanings within the context of the sociologist's framework, determined by the research problem as well the various institutionalized principles of the discipline, additional "reading" of their meanings is necessarily provided.

In line with the social phenomenological approach, the main focus of the analysis is upon student teachers' experience, in the form of socially distributed and approved <u>knowledge</u>. This includes what is taken as knowledge of teaching among the students, how the social world is defined and conceptualized, the terminology, and so on. And as said before, what is focused on is primarily what is felt to be

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[1] It is important to note that all quotations are my own translations from icelandic. Any flaws or distortions which may have taken place in the translation are solely my responsibility.

significant to them, shared, and transmitted.

Finally, it is important to remark that by emphasizing what is shared by student teachers, the study necessarily presents an ideal-typical view of students: a view of the "typical" student teacher; dealing with "typical" problems; to which "typical" solutions are applied. However, it should be remembered that such an personal ideal type is a pure construct or "puppet" created for exclusively methodological purposes to gain access to certain meanings. It is a deliberate exaggeration of certain selected features of student teachers' reality on the expence of others, but it is certainly not an arbitrary creation.

Chapter 5

THE UNIVERSITY

5.1 An Overview

The University College of Education (Kennarahaskoli Islands), is one of two universities in Iceland, the other being the University of Iceland (Haskoli Islands). The University College of Education is an independent institution, separated from the University of Iceland both administratively and geographically. Both institutions, however, as most other educational institutions in Iceland, are under the authority of the Ministry of Education.

At the University College of Education, the training of regular as well as handicraft and domestic science teachers for the nine-year comprehensive primary school and pre-school classes, takes place. To enter the program, students must hold a degree from a recognized secondary school, which usually consist of four years of study following the completion of the comprehensive primary school examination (Grunnskolaprof).[13]

In 1982, the University College of Education replaced the secondary institution Teacher Training College

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[13] Teachers at the secondary level must hold a university degree in their subject and complete a compulsory one-year course in Pedagogy and Didactics at the University of Iceland and which includes student teaching. Why this program is not housed at the University College of Education is an interesting question worth investigating. However, there is some evidence that a "stratification" of knowledge in society has some explanatory significance in this respect.

(Kennaraskoli Islands). Since 1978, a fundamental reorganization of the program has been going on. This reorganization, which still is in progress, reflects the movement towards "open" and "integrated" studies which were part of the ideology of "progressive" education which were gaining support in Britain and the other scandinavian countries at that time.

The following five points indicate the main content of these plans from 1978:

1. Organize the program around main themes which include the integration of individual subjects.
2. that students and teachers at the university work together in the reorganization of the program, both as a whole and on parts of it.
3. that the program becomes more organized around the teachers' pedagogical task.
4. that studies in the pedagogical subjects and the specializations (subjects taught in the comprehensive primary school), relate more directly to a practical school work.
5. that students become more active and independent in their studies.

In spite of various practical difficulties involved in the establishment of these ideas, such as the instructors' lack of belief in this project and their commitment to their subject, the university's authorities are relatively satisfied with the development of these plans. Already, 2/3

of the program, the first and the second year, has been reorganized along these lines, focusing on themes like, "The Child At the Beginning of School," "School and Society," and now the theme, "The Teacher in Service" is in progress.

The claimed effectiveness of this new program is, among other things, defended with reference to student teachers' work, expecially their final theses. It is claimed that under the present organization, student teachers' theses have become "better organized," making "better use of available material, more "comprehensive," and so forth.

In the development of the program, student teachers play an active part. They have one representative for every four teachers in the University Administration Council, and every year they participate in extensive group discussion about the status and development of the program. In these discussions, almost all kinds of issues are raised, many of them directed explicitly at the university's authorities or instructors.

At present time, about 300 students are enrolled in the program, of which about 104 are in their final year of study. Of these 104, female student are the great majority, i.e. 83. However, the rate of male students has been increasing over the last few years.

5.2 The Program

The program is organized into three years of study leading to the degree of Bachelor of Education. It consist of three equal parts, core subjects, pedagogical subjects, and specializations, the last one consisting of the main subjects taught in the primary schools. Students are to choose three subjects taught in the primary schools, two book-oriented and one vocational or artistic oriented.

An important part of the program is the student teaching or the teaching practicum. All together the student teaching covers 12 weeks of the program, first in "observing" and later for teaching. Part of the student teachers' work is to construct a "teaching plan," including stating the objective, organization of the teaching material which students intend to use, and pedagogical underpinnings. After every teaching period, two days are spent in discussing the teaching experience, difficulties, surprises, suggestions, and so on. In the rest of the thesis, these specific group discussions will be refered to as the Uppgjor.

Chapter 6

MAKING SENSE OF TEACHING

In this chapter an account will be presented of some important dimensions of the student teachers' perspectives on teaching and schooling. The notion of "perspective" is used in the Symbolic Interactionist and Phenomenological sense as refering both to ideas or "frames of reference" and actions. It contains a number of elements: a definition of the situation in which actors are involved; a statement of the goals they are trying to achieve; a set of ideas specifying what kind of activities are expedient and proper; a set of activities congruent with them; ideas about social objects within the enviroment and the various inanimate features of their resources at hand; and finally, a rationalization for being and acting therein.

Formally, the student teachers' perspectives will be constituted by their total knowledge of the situation. I do not, however, pretend to present the students' perspectives in all their infinite complexity, but want to investigate specifically certain aspects of their perspectives; namely, first, their perceptions of the teaching practicum; second, their characterization of the "cultures" of different schools, including their perspective on the various constraints they expect to face in the schools and their perspective on working in the classroom; third, their orientation to pedagogy, including their views on instruction and barriers to good instruction; and fourth,

their perceptions of "competence," including their sense for competition between teachers and student teachers. And as indicated before, the underlying purpose is to investigate student teachers' sense for social structure and how their common-sense knowledge of social structure penetrates their everyday conceptions and actions.

For the precise meaning of these terms, reference is made to chapter three.

6.1 The Significance of the Student teaching

In the last chapter we saw that the teaching practicum or student teaching constituted a significant part of the formal organization of the university's program. In the vocabulary of the university's personnel, the function of teaching practicum is to "relate theory to practice." The assistant president gave this the meaning of "giving students insight into the teacher's job, his work, colleagues, and so on." Because of the role teaching practicum played in the conduct of the study, we shall begin this presentation by trying to illustrate the meaning the teaching practicum has for students themselves; its perceived importance, its role, its limitations and so forth.

6.1.1 The Quest for Experience

Among student teachers there is no doubt about the importance of the teaching practicum. Over 50 per cent of

the students rate student teaching as the "most important preparation for their future work as teachers," 22 per cent as the second most important, and 22 per cent as number three.'[4]

The perceived importance of the teaching practicum lies primarily in the fact that the in-school period provides necessary "experience" of the "real school life," and an opportunity to "test out" some of the ideas acquired at the university:

> "Here we talk about teachers and pupils. Different ways of approaching the problems are discussed and who owns the problems. Many teachers, and all the student teachers who go from here to teach, take things too much on themselves. In the teaching practicum these things are cleared up, i.e. what is really happening. It is though probably different between schools how much things are cleared up, it is probably primarily a question of experience." (Interview with a female student)

What needs to be "cleared up" is both <u>what</u> students gain at the university as well as what they <u>do not</u> get there. So, the teaching practicum does not only provide student teachers with an opportunity to evaluate the schools they visit but also an opportunity to evaluate the university program in terms of their experience of the "real" school life.

'[4] See questionnaire question no. 14 in appendix A.

Contrary to what many studies on student teachers indicate, students' criticism is not particularily directed towards the "theoretical" courses per se, theory courses are often seen as both "interesting" and even "helpful." The questionnaire data revealed, for instance, that about thirty per cent of student teachers found "Developmental and Personality Psychology" as the "subject which was of most help in the latest teaching practice."[18] This is so, although student teachers "know" very well that "theories" are not "directly" applicable to the problems of the schools, or as one female student expressed it, "it is impossible just to walk into the schools with some theory and begin to use it."

What is criticised, however, is first of all the view of teaching; of pupils, instruction or the teacher's role, which is offered at the university. The views presented at the university are seen both as "idealistic" and "out of touch" with the reality "as it is" and is thus little help in coping with the actual and immediate problems student teachers face in the schools. Accordingly, as Lacey (1977) found in his study of student teachers at the University of Sussex, the solutions that appeared to make sense in the context of the university seemed far less relevant in the context of the school. The following quotation is typical for student teachers' views in this respect:

"The preparation, ideas and everything we get here

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[18]See questionnaire question no. 7 in appendix A

at the university is not what is happening in the schools...at least, this does not fit together. What we learn here is not applicable in the schools. while you are here you feel as there is so much you can do but when you get into the school there is so little you can do, various problems appear, and so on." (Interview with a female student)

And similarily:

"You frequently come across completely different things than what you are studying here and you do not see any relations." (Female in an interview)

Part of this "unrealistic" view of teaching which is presented at the university is manifested in students' definition of the "problems" they faced in the student teaching, that is the problem of "overestimating" pupils. About 35% of students saw this as one of the three most serious problems they faced in the teaching practicum.

But as the following excerpt from my data shows, student teachers are clearly aware of the fact that the view of teaching presented at the university is an <u>ideal</u> <u>picture</u>:

Here at the university a specific picture is given of the teacher's role. It is a specific image which is perhaps not excatly as it is. What is an ideal teacher? Who should say how an ideal teacher should be? That depends upon so many things. It is not only each individual, not only I myself who decides who I am, there are so many others who influence me, for

instance, colleagues and school authorities, there are laws and curriculum guides and pressure from above. There are views you get through your family, pupils, how they see you as a teacher and from many other groups as well." (Interview with a female student)

And next after the "unrealistic" view of the school life which is offered at the university, the lack of "practical guidance" was seen as the greatest problem with the program. This "pragmatic" orientation is clearly seen in students' perceptions of what they saw as the "best preparation for the coming teacher," i.e. "more student teaching," "talking to established teachers," and "more didactics."

TABLE 1

Students' ratings of the "Best Preparation for Teaching"

(Questionnaire)

	Per Cent
More student teaching	51
More didactics	24
Speaking to established teachers	15
More sociological or psychological theories	10
More emphasis on specializations	0
Total	100

This "quest for experience" of the real school life was further reinforced in the spring registration. The writer witnessed a great confusion and anger when students realized that one of the course offered, one which they felt they "had to take," was full which is something that seldom

happens. The course, offered by a teacher from the associated primary school, was called something like "The Teacher in His First Year of Service" and from the course description it could be read that the focus was on "the feelings, problems and worries associated with the first year(s) of teaching." The name of the course, its description and the fact that the teacher was seen as rather "pragmatically" oriented, made students feel it was absolutely necssary to take the course before they "went out" teaching.

This criticism of the lack of "practical guidance" was closely related to student teachers' criticism of the internal culture of the university. Especially were many of the instructors subject to such criticism. They were criticised for "knowing nothing about what is happening in the primary schools," for a lack of "communication," and for "not practicing what they teach." The following quotation is a good summary of these complaints:

> "I find this so unorganized. I do not see any connection between what the instructors are doing here. The students have criticised this lack of communication between instructors. The instructors are merely inside this institution and know nothing about the primary schools and cannot even talk together." (Interview with a female student)

Hence, it is clear to student teachers that there is a "gap" between what is happening in the primary schools and what is

being discussed at the university. According to this view, a significant part of student teachers' concerns about teaching are left to the students themselves to understand and cope with and much of what is presented at the university needs to be "corrected."

In the rest of this chapter I shall try to investigate what becomes of students' experiences of "real" school life" by focusing on their everyday talk and their "formal" meetings whereby these experiences are discussed and evaluated.

6.2 School Ethnography

Teaching does not occur in a social vacuum. As Denscombe (1980) puts it, "The resources allocated through the school organization confront them (teachers) with particular imperatives, dilemmas and possibilities which they feel obliged to take into account in their routine acticity." The notion of "culture" is sometimes used by sociologists to characterize such experiences and relationships, which not only set particular "choices" and "decisions" at particular times but also structure how these "choices" come about and are are defined in the first place. If, as we argued before, social actors can be characterized as their own "social ethnographers," acting on the basis of their "knowledge" of social life, we must expect student teachers to be engaged in practical investigation of the "cultures" of educational institutions. Of particular

interest in this respect are their concepts of "school-ethos" and "rules-in-use."

6.2.1 School-Ethos

Student teachers spend lot of time, both in formal meetings as well in their everyday life, discussing their teaching experience; the problems they faced, expectations they experienced, and the different nature of schools. An important aspect of this discussion of their teaching experience is their discussion and evaluation of different types of schools. This includes, basically, what it "would be like to teach" in these different kinds of schools. Central to this kind of evaluation was the notion of "school climate" or "school ethos":

> "The schools are different, in respect to climate, attitude towards pupils and to the job in general. You can both find schools in which the teachers talk very openly about the problems and try to find common solutions to the problems, but you can also find schools in which everyone just teaches in his own corner and where nothing is discussed."
> (Interview with a female student)

In general, student teachers do not speculate much over the origin of these differences between the schools, although the headmaster, the education of the teachers, etc., are clearly recognized as important factor for the general "orientation" of the school. What is more important is that

such "climate" or "ethos" tends to have an existence of its own, or as one female student said when telling me of the different schools she had experienced:

> "it seems that there exists a special climate in schools which continues to exist in spite of changing people, and which people learn when they enter the school." (Female student in an interview)

From listening to student teachers discuss the "ethos" of different schools, it became evident that such knowledge was not gained from any official rules, but was more often part of the "background knowledge" of the school, something which needs to be discovered over a period of time and was usually not discussed in the open. In one of the group discussions (Uppgjor, February, 1983), in which the topic was the most recent teaching practice, one of the students was telling the others of an official "credit system," used for controlling pupils' behaviour, which existed in one of the schools she had been in. This, in my view, is a typical example of the "ethnographic" work in which student teachers are constantly engaged:

> "Everything looked so peaceful and calm on the surface but when you got to know things better and when you started to work more with the teachers, you got different views on things, expressions of what was really going on and so forth. There was, for example, one teacher who was very much against this credit system and never used it." (Uppgjor, February

1983)

So, part of this "ethnographic" work is to figure out the "proper meanings" of things, to look beneath the surface meanings and see what is "really happening" as the expression goes. Part of this ability to interpret things and events is the knowledge of "appropriate" expressions to be used in the school setting. Frequently I heard student give "advises" such as the following:

> "You must never mention low ability class, only 'A-class', 'B-class', and so forth. When you do that the teachers understand what you mean and say, 'ah, yes of course'." (Group discussion in February 1983)

This is not to say that the normative nature of such "rules" and "expectations" are always clear to students at the time they are in the setting. This is rather something which becomes clear in retrospect when their experience is compared with other student teachers' experiences. Students often admit that at the time they were part of the setting, the situation just "became the reality":

> While I was in the school, the grouping of classes into 'good' and 'bad' classes seemed quite natural. The teacher explained this for us as if this was the only alternative, this rough grouping. But later you began to see the negative aspects of this."
> (Interview with a female student)

However, and this seems to be of crucial importance, these interactional patterns are almost without an exception seen

as beyond the control of the individual teacher and the task is rather to try to "understand" it and adapt to it. A common way of speaking about this constraining aspect of school life was in terms of "group pressure," "following the rules of the school," or to "take account of the other teachers." Typical expressions go like, "I think you have to try to follow the patterns which exist in the school you are in," or "I think that you always take much account of the other teachers, i.e. the group." The need to follow such rules or patterns, however, were frequently made accountable by taking over the other teachers' definition of the situation:

> "I mean, one teacher in a school cannot simply act completely different from all the others. I feel that he is bound by what is happening around him within the school, both because of the pupils and other teachers. Where I had, for instance, my last teaching practice, the cooperation between teachers was excellent and the other teachers said that it was very important to have it like that in order to avoid evoking fear or difficulties among others. Because if one teacher begins to do something on his own, then it can easily affect other teachers' teaching and the pupils as well. It would create confusion." (Interview with a female student).

Although it would clearly be going beyond a description of students' views to speculate here over the reasons why

students adapt to such "expectations," it is clear from their talk that the significance of these considerations are very pragmatic; it concerns nothing less than the working conditions of their coming job:

> "I think it matters very much where you finally end up. I find that the schools which are open for discussions about what goes on, etc., do not suffer as much for problems, such as discipline problems, because the open relationship between teachers make them realize that this is not only their personal problem." (interview with a female student)

These efforts to understand school life in order to find one's bearings within it as we have described it, reminds of Denscombe's (1982, 1980b) description of gaining "competence," both the ability to recognize a situation of a certain type and the ability to implement the course of action deemed appropriate amongst particular community. As Denscombe has pointed out, and student teachers clearly recognize, such a competence does not result from a knowledge of the formal organization of the school but requires a knowledge of how situations are defined and rules are used in practice.

6.2.2 Rules-In-Use

While the stable characteristics of each individual school were discussed in terms of "school ethos," or "school climate," the notion of rules-in-use was the corresponding

notion applied by student teachers to classroom practices. The concept (or other terms used to refer to the same notion) refers primarily to the interactional patterns within the classroom and to the "working rules" adopted therein. Both when the student teachers' own teaching was evaluated or planned, and also when practicing teachers' practices were discussed, the notion was of crucial importance. The following extract from my data is typical for student teachers' views of entering a new classroom situation:

> "You come into something another person has created, specific traditions and norms, definite interactional patterns which the teacher and pupils have created. You don't know these patterns and that adds to the difficulties involved in jumping into another person's role. This creates uncertainity. In addition, you may have completely different attitudes than the other teacher concerning the methods to be used." (Interview with a female student)

In other words, patterns of classroom interactions are perceived as different <u>rules-in-use</u>. But the notion does not only refer to the interactional patterns between pupils and between pupils and the teacher, it also refers, as indicated above, to the "way of working" within the classroom, i.e. to the way work is organized in the classroom.

But although rules-in-use are seen as "constraining" for newcoming student teachers, they are also important stabilizing factor of classroom life and provide means of controling the situation. The point is that rules-in-use, in a similar way as the school-ethos, has a dynamic of its own, over and above the individuals who are part of it. Student teachers, for instance, frequently speak of pupils as being "stuck" in the teacher's rules or methods or the "difficulties of implementing something new" because of the former teacher's rules. The next three quotations are, in my view, very illustrative for student teachers' conceptions of rules-in-use:

> "As I said before, we had to change our way of teaching because the pupils were not trained to do what we thought they were. This may be different between schools. But you realized that you have to get to know the kids and know what they can do to be able to do something." (Female student in a group discussion)

The following quotations are good examples of how such rules-in-use are central both to instruction and discipline problems:

> "It was quite surprising how they [the pupils] participated in discussion, they are used to it you see, only one pupil talked at a time, then the next, and so on. It was tremendous. You see, it was her [the teacher's] rule and you only kept on discussing

things." (Uppgjor, February 1983)

And furthermore:

"...and if I used her [the teacher's] methods, to interact with the pupils, then I had the same power as she [the teacher]. Then the pupils did much more what I wanted. I think that the pupils were not ready to take over some new methods from myself." (Female student in a group discussion)

The above quotations imply the view that, in contrast to the school-ethos, rules-in-use are largely under control of the individual teacher. However, as the theorists concerned with various "strategies" teachers and student teachers use in order to come to terms with their problems and dilemmas have pointed out, there are "constraining" factors which are instrumental in determining the parameters of such rules (Westbury 1973; Sharp and Green 1975; Wood 1977; A. Hargreaves, 1978) Student teachers conceive of pupils as one such factor, but in similar way as an "official" sociologist, students are aware that the parameters of classroom interactions are not completely "imposed" but have to be <u>negotiated</u> to some extent:

"When you go into the teaching practicum you enter interactional rules which you receive from the other teachers and which you are constantly reminded of. I think that it depends also upon the pupils what rules are in existence. I feel that it should be negotiated between pupils and teacher. But I cannot

come up with some patent solution for what would be the best interactional rules." (Interview with a female student)

This strategy of "negotiating" the parameters of teaching is central to many of student teachers' plans of actions and evaluation of good teaching:

"I would construct a teaching plan and tell the pupils everything about it. Then it is an empirical question whether the plan is good or not."(Male student in an interview)

And furthermore:

"The teacher should make it clear to the pupils that he is human and does not know everything. I think that the teacher is in full right to use dictionaries and so on." (Female student in an interview)

Another related "classroom strategy" is to make pupils happy. Success in teaching is frequently seen in that context:

"You feel you have done a good job if you have accomplished what you intended to do...if pupils are happy and you got through to them and they feel comfortable." (Female student in an interview)

Pupils are not seen, however, as the only determining factor in this respect, the general orientation of the school, or the <u>school ethos</u>, is also seen as having the potential of creating boundaries to what is possible in the classroom by

imposing psychological constraints upon teachers:

> "I think that it is extremely difficult when your own conviction and what you are doing contradicts what is happening in the school. I believe that it would be one of the greatest shocks a teacher could get. I think that I am worrying most about this, that my conviction will contradict what is being done...But this is only a question of whether you will adapt to anything, something you have been doing all your life." (Interview with a female student)

But in spite of the limitations the pupils and the general orientation of schools impose upon the establishment of "classroom rules," student teachers place much faith in the possibility of establishing appropriate interactional and working rules in the classroom. Once that has been done, teaching becomes relatively easy. This view corresponds perfectly with Edwards and Furlong's study (1977) of the structuring of classroom interaction and particularily their view that interactional and interpretive rules become, in the course of time, <u>taken for granted</u> by teachers and pupils. What makes this plan plausible, and not only an unrealistic dream, is that student teachers, as the teachers in Edward and Furlong's study, "know", and assume that pupils "know" as well, that in the end it is the <u>teacher who has the power</u>:

> "It is not possible for teachers to come into the

> classroom and intend to be very liberal and take pupils as equal partners, we are simply not. We occupy different roles. However, in the end we want the power, else nothing will be done in the class." (Interview with a female student)

So far we have looked at some of student teachers' situated meanings, i.e. as they directly relate to their everyday worries and evaluations. However, students frequently underpin their views with more abstract moral or pedagogical arguments. Such "rationalizations" often refer to the social and psychological importance of rules:

> "I think that there must be a rule that kids cannot do everything they like, whenever they like...We live in a society in which it is not possible to do everything and I think that the kids do not feel secure without rules, or at least as I know kids." (Interview with a female student)

And furthermore:

> "I think that it is worst for the pupils if there is not, in the long run, working peace in the classroom. If everything is always upside down in the class, I think that the pupils feel very uncomfortable. I think that, in the end, pupils want rules and control, peace to work." (Male student in a group discussion)

The aspects of student teachers' experiences we have presented here do not constitute a part of the official

curriculum of the university and can therefore be characterized as the "extra" curriculum of their training or what more frequently have become known as the hidden curriculum. In the next section, however, we shall look more specifically into student teachers' perceptions of classroom interactions, with special focus on their attitudes towards teaching itself, including the "assumptions" underlying their definitions of teaching.

6.3 Classroom Strategies

Interpretive sociologists, especially phenomenologists and ethnomethodologists, have spent a great deal of energy investigating the symbolic systems underlying classroom interactions and the interpretive procedures to which they give rise. Teachers' assumptions about various aspects of educational reality, such as "ability," "knowledge," "achievement" or the "natural" relationships between these, have gained specific attention in this respect. It is often assumed that the pedagogical views teachers hold determine largely the kind of interactions which take place within the classroom. The present section seeks to illustrate some of student teachers' views in this respect, focussing on their conceptions of "instruction" and related issues.

6.3.1 Understanding Pupils

We have already come across the view that "understanding" pupils is essential for being "able to do

something" in the classroom. From listening and talking to student teachers it became evident that to "know" or "get through to pupils" was absolutely a necessary condition for successful interaction with pupils, whether it concerns instruction or discipline problems. This is reflected in a repeated explanation of the difficulties students faced in their teaching, i.e. the lack of time they had for "getting to know" the pupils:

> "I felt that the main problem, however, to be the problem of getting through to the pupils, to get to know them really well. We spend all the time trying to know each other. I am testing the pupils, try to find out who they are, how I can meet them. They are so different." (Group discussion in February)

So, subjective understanding of pupils has clearly serious practical implications for student teachers. As one female student explained:

> "I found it most difficult to understand them, how they would see this, and try to find issues to motivate them to try themselves, so that they would read themselves... Then I realized that it was a major hindrance not having investigated the situation before." (Female student in a group discussion)

This view was clearly reinforced by the co-operating teachers. In one of the general group discussions after the latest teaching practice, in which co-operating teachers

participated, the view was expressed by the co-operating teachers that it was important that student teachers had enough time to "get to know" the pupils.'‘ They also expressed the view that the fall was not the most appropriate time for the teaching practicum because at that time even they themselves do not "know the pupils very well."

The question immediately arises, what do student teachers mean by "understanding" pupils and why is it seen as important? While the notion of understanding is seldom spelled out by students themselves, but is rather taken for granted, it became clear that "understanding" pupils consisted primarily of categorization or what phenomenologists call "typification" of pupils; their ability, social background, personal or other specific characteristics of pupils. But it is important to note that although the broad meaning of "understanding" was taken for granted by student teachers, categorization was not. In my discussions with students it was evident that some categories were clearly difficult to communicate to outsiders:

> "I found that there was a wide range within the class. Two or three were extremely good, understood everything...but there were others who were not enough, what to say, what do you call it, eh, maybe quick enough, and did not understand

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'‘ Uppgjor, February 1983

everything."(Female student in an interview)

Others' definitions of the pupils were also frequently challenged, both the university's professors but also the co-operating teachers:

> "This happened in my last year teaching practicum. The teacher had defined two pupils as having difficulties with reading, for being "slow," and took them aside and gave them special material. But when I took over, and the teacher went away, I did'nt experience this as so serious problem that they couldn't follow the others. But this only prevailed, that they were slow, the concept "slow" was actually used, but the others were "good." But what is to be a slow learner?" (Female student in an interview)

But in spite of occasional occurence of such doubts over specific definitons of pupils, categorization of pupils, expecially in abnormal psychological terms, were not themselves challenged. Pupils were seen as having "school phobia," being "deprived," or "playing the role of a loser", and frequently student teachers even specified the exact number of pupils that had "difficulties"!

Such terms or typifications, taken from developmental psychology, physiology, other academic subjects or from common-sense, were seen as absolutely neccessary for coming to terms with the class, to discriminate between pupils and for being able to implement the "proper" method or treatment

of individual pupils or to "get through to them." It had to do with, for example, whether or when one should raise specific problems with other teachers or the headmaster, when one should talk to a psychologist about individual pupils, and so on.

However, although such categorization has some taken for granted practical implications, most of them do not. The situation is "problematic" in the sense that there is no "cookery book" knowledge - no "recipes" attached to most of these labels - which makes actions "flow" from such definitions. The following quotation is an example of this ambivalence involved in relating "theory" and "practice." A female student is describing what she felt absolutely necessary for teachers to know about a class:

> "I would like to know something about their cognitive and personal development. Take adolescents for example, I would like to know about their situations, their social situations, their physical development, reasons for what happens in the classroom. Then you start to think about the social background of each individual student, and how he is, his needs, who they are and what you have been doing. Is it the conditions in the school which explain his behavior, is it my teaching methods, the goals, do they not fit, does the material not interest him? Is something wrong with the student, something physical, social? (Interview with a female

student)

In the coming section I shall attempt to show how this notion of "understanding" pupils and student teachers' ideas of instruction fit together.

6.3.2 Instruction

The notion of "instruction," as a specific issue, does not occupy considerable space in student teachers' talk. When it does, however, it tends to be posed in "progressive" terms, such as in terms of "guided choice," "favourable conditions for learning," or "training of pupils to search for themselves." The teacher is even seen as not capable of "teaching," he merely "provides conditions" for learning. "Learning is a process within the individual." However, almost all the data reveal the central importance given to "didactics" by students as one of the most important and useful preparation for teaching.'' Didactics, both "specific" and "general," is not only seen as one of the most important preparation for teaching, but also one of the most common complains over what was lacking in their preparation for their student teaching.

In students' view, "didactics" refers primarily to methods for organizing and transmitting the material. This corresponds to the view of teaching we have repeatedly come across, i.e. as a question of "method" or an "approach," something like a technique the teacher performs:

'' See question 14 in appendix A

> The teacher has really nothing to do with learning. Learning is of course a process inside the pupil himself. However, it is really the methods which matter, methods which the teacher often creates." (Interview with a male student)

This instrumental notion of teaching clearly penetrates student teachers' everyday vocabulary. Over the first few days at the university I frequently heard students use the concept of "input" (Innlogn) without knowing exatly what was meant by it. Soon I found out that the term, which in Icelandic has the same connotation of "putting in," was used by student teachers to refer, in a very wide sense, to the act of "introducing something new" to pupils, to "introduce the material," or something of that sort. But although this meaning was taken by students as self-evident and not in need of any further legitimation, some difficulties emerged if they were asked to comment upon or explain its meaning in more specific terms. The following part of a discourse was characteristic of the responses under these circumstances:

> Student: "I think it is absolutely necessary to have rules about silence when input takes place, i.e. when the teacher is transmitting something, so everybody can follow."
>
> I: "Input into what?"
>
> Student: "Into the class."
>
> I: "Into the pupils?"
>
> Student: (annoyed) "Into the class!"

This instrumental view of instruction was also reflected in student teachers' comments on a given statement in the questionnaire.'* The statement the student teachers were asked to comment on was something like, "I taught these "poor" kids semantics for six lessons but afterwards I realized that they did not learn anything." Surprisingly, none of the respondents, who were about fifty per cent of the group, did criticise the view that the teacher is actually teaching although no one is learning! Most of the comments concerned things like "bad expression," the teacher was "badly organized," that semantics was not taught in the primary schools," or something of that sort.

Interestingly, this technical view of teaching was not seen by student teachers as opposite to the "individualistic" orientation of the new, progressive, approaches. In their opinion, all instruction is in a sense a question of "method," whether it is the "traditional" or "progressive" style. The traditional style was not dismissed because it was "wrong" but primarily for how "boring" it is but also because such "feeding" style is seen as producing more "passive" pupils than the other:

> "I not not really think that the outcomes of the traditional method and the newer methods are so different. However, it seem to me that pupils from the so-called open schools are more active and independent than the others, and in that sense, the

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'* See question 16 for details.

> newer methods have advantages over the other. You can actually see the difference between schools in how pupils work. But I think this is primarily a question of a method." (Interview with a female student)

However, the "open" schools, with their "new" methods, are not seen as producing radically different "outcomes" in terms of knowledge or skills. Or as one student expressed it when discussing her experience in an "open" system:

> "Well, it went alright, the kids were happy and I was happy as well. But you never know what is accomplished. I have some doubts about this open systems in which children are supposed to learn by themselves; the kids are extremely clever in pretending, having these copies in their hand, read perhaps the first pages." (Group discussion in February 1983)

With respect to this emphasis upon instruction as a "technique" or a "method" it is not surprising that generally students see "good organization" as the primary means for successful teaching. However, this should not be taken to mean that a "method" is all that it takes, instruction is not seen by students as an isolated issue but a part of much larger context, presupposing as we saw "understanding," and being constrained by various external factors such as exams and the official curricula.

We shall, following Schutz (1970), characterize these "external" constraints on teaching behavior as imposed relevances upon student teachers' definitions of the situation.

6.3.3 Imposed Relevances

As we have repeatedly emphasized, student teachers do not experience themselves as free agents in the classroom. They are both aware of the many "constraining" aspects of the schools and also of the contradictory goals of the educational system. We have seen how the problems of "getting through to the pupils" or "understanding" pupils are central to students views of instruction. And in line with the "progressive" ideology, pupils are seen as "different" and in need of different "treatments," which presupposes, as we saw, "knowledge" of each individual pupil. Hence, every student teacher "knows" that the pupil/teacher ratio and mixed classes are closely related to the nature of instruction possible in the class:

> "In these large classes you always get stuck in these teaching methods, doing some routine stuff and there are always some pupils who are far ahead and others who do not understand anything. You have maybe ten pupils who feel comfortable and are following what is happening, what about all the others?" (Female student in an interview)

So, although most students would prefer, under ideal

circumstances, mixed ability classes, under present circumstances they see such an organization of classes as a poor alternative:

> "I believe that with respect to the system as it is to day, I think it is impossible to have mixed ability classes as most of them are now...both those who are ahead and those who are behind get lost in mixed classes. It is terrible to see kids who have given up trying to follow the others maybe ten years old and being fifteen now. They only sit and watch the floor and have no chances of keeping up." (Male student in a group discussion)

Such and similar views were behind the "facts" that 55 per cent of students preferred the "same age" and "similar ability" organization of classes and only 22 per cent "same age" and "different ability" classes.'' These views were also behind the "fact" that almost 40 per cent of students mentioned "class organization" as "number one" problem they faced in the teaching practicum.

Exams and the "official" curriculum are also factors which are seen as imposing considerable constraints upon instruction. First, students "know" that it is <u>expected</u> by teachers, headmasters and parents that pupils have sufficient knowledge to move up to the next grade:

"When the pupils move up to the next grade above

''Almost without an exception, students remarked in the questionnaire that under existing circumstances nothing else is realistic. See question 10 in appendix A.

> then it is expected that they know enough to leave this class and the teachers do not take any chances of giving their pupils less preparation than other teacher." (Interview with a female student)

The exams and the choice of curriculum material are also closely related to the evaluation of teachers' "competence," particularily as it concerns the National Comprehensive Examination (Grunnskolaprof). Hence, "getting them through" becomes the teacher's main concern when it gets near to this exam:

> "The teachers are of course always trying to save their own skin as everybody towards these exams...in which they are automatically evaluated, this is what most teachers think." (Male student in an interview)

And furthermore:

> "Teachers teach mostly what they expect will be asked about in the exams. You may want to train pupils in some skills to do this or that, but that is not what will be asked about on the National Comprehensive Exam." (Male student in an interview)

But aside from this pressure from the National Comprehensive Exam, and the "expectations" of teachers, headmasters and parents, student teachers see major difficulties in the idea of developing their own teaching material, which makes the "official" curriculum material the only "realistic" alternative:

> "If you want to prepare your own material which

> would satisfy you then this job would become a 24 hours a day job. You soon learn to do what is practical and possible." (Interview with a female student)

And finally, pupils themselves are seen as putting pressure on what should be taught:

> "Similar things must be taught within the same school, else the pupils will come and ask why they do not learn the same things as the others." (Female student in an interview)

What I have tried to show in this section is how student teachers' definitions of teaching, of instruction and other aspects of the teacher's task, is posed in a context which explicitly takes account of the interactive, material and ideological constraints upon teaching behavior and structures "realistic" alternatives of actions. However, it is important to note that these definitions, and actions congruent with these definitions, are primarily aimed at "getting by," to make good impression, to handle "problematic" situations, or to gain recognition for their ability to conceptualize school reality. In this way, student teachers' sense for social structure is "mediated" through their situated own "culture," including their interests and goals.

Throughout this discussion we have on occasions come across the notion of "competence" as an explanatory device. In the last section of this presentation we shall try to

focus more explicitly on the meaning of "competence," how it functions and what it signifies.

6.4 Competence Anxiety

In the recent sociological litterature on teachers the concept of "membership competence" has gained increased attention. Formally, the concept refers to the question of "what it takes to become a competent member of a group." However, probably the most visible indicator of this struggle to become "competent" is the feeling of "competence anxiety." In this section we shall try to focus on student teachers' competence anxiety as it is found in their perception of the "social significance of noise," their "presentation of self," and their feeling towards "going out to teach."

6.4.1 The Significance of Noise

We have already seen that part of students' "ethnographic" work conducted in student teaching consists in finding out the "real" meanings of things and events, to locate specific meaning within their proper context. One such specific meaning was attached to "noise" in the classroom. The point is that "noise" is usually related to "discipline problems" which again is related to the ideal of teachers' "competence:"

"I mean, there are these demands from the schools that you keep discipline, and nothing is suppsed to

> to be heard from your classroom and you become really afraid of not being able to cope with this. There are different demands from the schools and from different teacher, but most often you are judged by this." (Male student in an interview)

This relation between noise and expectations and competence is further associated with the idea of "competition" between teachers.

> "I have the feeling that there is so much competition between teachers and as a teacher you are always afraid that there is too much noice in your classroom but not in the next classroom. What do the other teachers then say?" (Female student in an interview)

What is at stake is the other teachers perception of your competence as a teacher. A "competent" teacher is one who, among other things, can cope with the discipline problems in the classroom and keep pupils quiet. Hence, one of the more important "strategies" student teachers plan to adopt is what Denscombe (1982, 1980b) characterized as "Keepin 'em quiet" strategy.

This strategy is one of the primary examples of student teachers' <u>contextualization</u> of classroom life, i.e. the act of locating specific meanings of classroom events in a wider set of social values operating in schools. In this sense, noise has even more to do with "extra" classroom relations than it has to do with the teacher-pupil relationship.

6.4.2 Presentation of Self

Discipline problems are not only an indicator of a teacher's incompetence among established teachers, but is also an issue of significance among students themselves. It was evident that in the group discussions, students tended to discuss discipline problems in much more general and impersonal terms than in individual interviews in which they talked more explicitly about their own experiences of such problems. However, soon I found out that discipline problems were discussed much more, and more openly, at that time than ever before:

> "In the last year Uppgjor, nobody would recognize that they were having discipline problems. I think it is rather difficult for teachers to acknowledge that things are not going well with them." (Female student in an interview)

This seems to point to the dilemma Lacey identified in his study (1977) of student teachers at the University of Sussex, that is the dilemma of communicating experienced problems in order to "share" these problems and try to push towards a solution but on the risk of damaging their "professional" image. At the final year of the program, this temptation to "collectivize" such problems seems to have gained priority:

> "This is really the first time I find discipline problems so pressing, this is probably because we are getting so near to it." (Interview with a female

student)

This reminds us of the fact that the student teachers' culture cannot simply be taken as a homogeneous set of meanings. Student teachers are not merely coping with "status" and "competence" problems in the schools or at the university but are fighting for a recognition in their own group as well. This also draws attention to the function of students' culture as an "intervening" variable between the social structure and the individual's orientation. It becomes clear from listening to student teachers that they are not merely telling each other stories of schools and teachers, but are, as I remarked before, in a significance sense negotiating the meaning of teaching.

6.4.3 Going "Out" to Teach

As we have seen throughout this chapter, significant part of students' considerations concern the university's definitions of teaching. Although these definitions are usually seen as "unrealistic" and "out of touch" with the reality of the primary schools, they continue to occupy their concerns and perspectives. This is clearly manifested in their talk about going "out" to teach. My "note" from the middle of February gives some hints concerning this feeling of leaving the university.

**February 1983

"To day I was speaking to one of the female students who has participated in the group discussions. She

told my how she has been 'taught at the university to become afraid of teaching that I am much more afraid to go into teaching now than when I went to teach after my matriculation exam.' As she was telling me about this, a girl about 30 years old, who had been listening to us, came and said that this was quite true. She didn't know whether she would 'ever go into teaching again.' Then she told me that she had taught five years before she entered the University."

If the university's definitions of teaching are "unrealistic" and "out of touch" how does it come that students feel they have been "taught to be afraid" of teaching? It seems to me that the answer lies in change of students' "relevance structure" concerning teaching. Throughout their training, various aspects of teaching have become "problematic" which were taken-for-granted before:

"When I went into teaching after my Matriculation Exam I went with completely different ideas about teaching. I didn't realize that there were so many possibilities so when I go out to teach now I feel much more insecure than when I went before."

(Interview with a female student)

As the following excerpt from my data indicates, an important aspect of this change in relevances concern the definition of teacher's <u>responsibility</u>:

"I find the number of pupils in a class really

frightening, that is if you begin to see yourself as responsible for all these kids, that they do well and feel well." (Female student in an interview)

In spite of student teachers' unfavorable comments on preparation they get at the university, the attention which has been drawn towards many "unproblematic" aspects of teaching, such as the moral aspects of the teacher's role, may perhaps turn out to be the most lasting influences on student teachers. Let's end this presentation of student teachers' defintions of teaching with the words of one of the students as she evaluates what she has gone through at the university:

"I often think that the university does not perform its task properly. But sometimes I feel that I am always discovering new interesing things I have been taught here at the university. Many things are done here which are coming to help you in the long run but it is expected that you search for solutions yourself. I know that most students are asking for ready-made solutions to all their problems but do not even know how these solutions would look like." (Interview with a female student)

Chapter 7

SUMMARY, INTERPRETATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Summary

This study was designed to describe student teachers' knowledge of structural and cultural constraints upon teachers, not as abstract propositions, but as it was realized in their everyday evaluations and plans of actions. The purpose was to demonstrate that student teachers were not "unwittingly" constrained by the structural and cultural aspects of their situation but that student teachers' everyday definitions of teaching "take account of" such factors. There is evidence in the sociological literature that social actors, in order to participate adequately in social life, develop a sense for social structure. Although this "sense" of social life is usually taken-for-granted as a "natural" aspect of our everyday life, most of our talk and actions tend to be posed in the context of this knowledge of social life.

Given the basic assumptions of interpretive sociology, it was judged appropriate to conduct a field study, using participant observation methods, including observation, formal and informal interviewing, documentary research and participation in students' everyday activity.

As the previous chapter showed, a central characteristic of student teachers' lifeworld is the pragmatic nature of their definitions of teaching and the

corresponding practical reasoning, or what we called practical theorizing, in which students constantly engaged. This pragmatic nature of their definitions is best illustrated by the fact that for them, school reality is primarily a-reality-to-cope-with, a view which is summarized in the pressing question, "What is it like to teach?" This endeavor takes primarily the form of constructing general definitions of teaching: of the limitations and possibilities involved; of classroom problems and their wider context; of expectations of established teachers; of other students; of classroom interactions, definitions which provide a set of boundary conditions within which the student must make decisions choices regardless of personal views and dislikes. This includes making sense of various aspects of school life; of varieties within schools, of situated meanings, and figuring out the "proper" vocabulary and explanations appropriate to each type of school or setting. Such definitions are not simply given, but require extensive "ethnographic" or "interpretive" work, from which students, through constant comparison of individual experiences, come up with terms like "school ethos," "rules-in-use," "teaching methods," etc., in order to come to terms with school life.

Student teachers' strategies for coping with their difficulties, or the difficulties they expect to face in the future, such as being "extremely well organized," "keep them quiet," etc., are posed in this context of general

definitions of school life. In this context, which is partly posed in progressive educationist vocabulary acquired at the university, instruction, discipline problems, expectations of others, etc., are not seen as isolated issues, each with its own peculiar problems and solutions, but rather as different but related aspects of various rules-in-use or of teachers' approaches. Some of these rules, those which reflect the general orientation of each school, were seen as beyond the control of each individual teacher, but others, particularily classroom rules, were seen as partly under the teacher's control. However, although such "rules" or "methods" operating in the classroom were seen as partly the creation of each individual teacher, the wider context of the classroom - the organization of the school, its dominating ideology, national exams, class size and wider set of social values - were seen as instrumental in determining the parameters of such rules. A primary example of such "contextualization" of classroom life was found in student teachers' interpretation of noise. The significance of noise was not particularily that it interrupted normal classroom activity but primarily that it was a "sign," for other teachers, of their incompetence. In this way, the situated meaning of noise had more to do with "extra" classroom social relations than it had to do with, say, instruction.

This instrumental view of teaching is not only part of student teachers' "sociological" explanation of life in

schools but constituted also a significant part of their pedagogical assumptions. Pupils were seen as "in need of" rules, society is seen as "requiring rules," the teacher's task is seen as to "create conditions," not impose knowledge into childern, or to teach children to "search for them selves." However, if such methods are to be applied successfully, teachers have to "know" pupils, their ability, personalities, and so on.

7.2 Theoretical Interpretations

As we indicated before, the basic question underlying the study concerned student teachers' awareness of "structural" constraints upon teaching. This question was again part of the larger theoretical dilemma, that of presenting social actors so mechanistically determined as to deny any self-determination on the part of the individual, or so free to construct their social world as to ignore all constraints on individual action.

This problem has primarily been posed within the theory of <u>definition of the situation</u>, expecially from the Symbolic Interactionist and Schutz's phenomenological perspective. From that point of view, the problem concerned the nature and scope of student teachers' definitions of teaching, particularily the extent to which their definitions took "external" constraints upon teaching into account. As we have presented the data, student teachers' definitions of the situation were found as consisting of several elements:

knowledge of the social organization of schools; of expectations of others; of assumptions about the nature of social interactions in general and instruction in particular; of cultural values; and of conceptions about appropriate strategies to cope with, to some extent, perceived problems. We also found that these definitions were not isolated "provinces of meanings," but had a strong practical overtone, guided by the aim of "getting by."

Aside from such "awareness" of social and cultural constraints, we might want to ask about the autonomy of student teachers' defintions of teaching, i.e. the extent to which they may be seen as including some "active" or "voluntary" elements. For without giving some autonomy to their definitions, it could be argued that the definitions themselves are just "determined" by the social setting to which they apply. The answer to that question depends, of course, upon definitions of terms, for example what we mean by "active" or "volunatry," in this context. But while this problem of self-direction or autonomy has usually been discussed in the Kantian sense as a question of "self-reflection," or in the symbolic interactionist notion of "self-dialogue," we have already argued that the problem is probably better stated in terms of application of knowledge, appropriate knowledge in given situations. In the former sense, as an awareness of the epistemological, social or ideological presuppositions of one's own knowledge, student teachers, as most other social actors, would

probably not rate very high. But in the latter sense, as the ability to apply relevant knowledge or implement appropriate actions in given situations, student teachers' activity must be seen as both "purposive" and "intentional." This might need some further elaboration. We have already characterized part of student teachers' efforts as "practical reasoning" or "practical theorizing," refering primarily to sense making procedures although specifically focused on the possibilities and limitations of situationally relevant strategies. This includes what student teachers have to "know" about teaching to become "competent" members of the teaching profession, both as actors and as interpreters.[20] For such definitions are in no way given to student teacher. They require extensive interpretive work; understanding situated meanings, using appropriate vocabulary, providing plausible explanations, etc. which is mostly gained through practice as we argued before. The section of "School Ethnography" was primarily intended to illustrate this process. This, however, is not merely an individual process. By listening to students it became clear to me that students were not merely telling each other stories about their teaching experience, instead, they were in Lacey's terms, collectivizing their problems, but what I prefer to characterize as negotiating the meanings of school life.

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[20] This is of course only an analytical distinction, the point is that an action, as a socially meaningful behavior, requires interpretive competence on the behalf of the actor.

In terms of the notion of "strategy," perhaps the most original and autonomous strategy student teachers conduct is their definitions themselves. These definitions must both take account of various elements of school life but also meet certain requirements concerning the use of right words, expressions, and so forth. This means that some adaptation must be accomplished; i.e. to use a vocabulary and expressions which are seen as plausible expressions but which are not so devoid of "empirical" reference to be inadequate to deal with the social reality of the schools. The student teachers' "solution" to this dilemma is to select from the vocabulary of the progressive ideology those words and meanings which both indicate knowledge of the new progressive educational ideas but are also useful to express their everyday experience in not too complicated way. The expressions of "input," "teacher's methods," "rules-in-use," "conditions for learning," are such expressions which both are taken as plausible expressions but also provide student teachers' with definitions or views of teaching which are not so complicated and which have rather unproblematic implications for teaching.

So, the most important conclusion of the study is that student teachers' definitions of the situation do in fact take clear accounts of, and are posed in this context, of "structural" and "material" constraints upon teachers. This means that, contrary to Sharp and Green's view, student teachers themselves locate their definitions of teaching in

a context of "external" social relations, doing exactly what Sharp and Green defined as the task of the sociologist. But as Edwards and Furlong (1978) pointed out, every description of social life is the outcome of selective observation and interpretations, and no scheme of reference (theory) is the "true" one, and this holds true both for researchers and student teachers. So in spite of somewhat different vocabulary, frame of reference or relevance structures, student teachers and established sociologists share some methodological principles, such as posing the problem of "validity" in terms of predictability. Both are in a sense aimed at verifying certain "theories," although in one case it is claimed to be for the sake of the theory itself but in the other case it is aimed at "getting by."

Finally, it is concluded that it is essential in sociologial inquiry, as Edwards and Furlong (1978) emphasized, to observe people "doing things together" (p.154), to avoid the crude determinism of explaining their behavior by reference to "external" forces which cannot themselves be observed.

7.3 Practical Implications

The study provided exceptional opportunities to inquire into the nature of the teaching practicum and the meaning and significance it had for student teachers. It seems to be a rather common assumption, both in theory and practice, that the most pressing "problems" facing student teachers or

new teachers, are classroom problems. However, as this study has revealed, "classroom problems" are neither the most important problems nor confined to classrooms alone! To say that issues like discipline problems or instruction problems were exclusively confined to classrooms would be to seriously distort the structure of meanings within student teachers' lifeworld.

With respect to all the work which goes into student teachers' "ethnographic" work in the above sense, it is remarkable that student teachers, at least in this case, do not find any help at the university to conceptualize or evaluate this important aspect of becoming a teacher. By completely ignoring and not challenging the ideological meanings operating in schools and the constraining relations students are confronted with in the schools, and giving it to the students themselves to understand and cope with, the student teaching part of the program can properly be characterized as the hidden curriculum of teacher training.

Two implications seem to follow from these findings. First, it seems to me that there is a pressing necessity of providing student teachers with a conceptual framework for analysing schools as organizations, in which teachers are constrained by various structural and cultural factors, ideological meanings and power relations. It has to be admitted that education is to a large extent a political enterprise in which teachers have only limited control over goal and methods, and that "good ideas" are often dead words

without structural changes in the educational system. Secondly, with respect to students' interests in "understanding" pupils, it seems to me that they would benefit more from various hermeneutical or phenomenological readings, which are primarily guided by an interest in intersubjective understanding, than from much of the positivistic oriented theories of the child development or behavioral principles which presuppose an intersubjective understanding for its application.

It is hoped that the present study, although essentially exploratory, may bring some insight by presenting the familiar in a different light, or by making explicit what is normally taken for granted.

7.4 Suggestion for Further Research

In this study, a limited aspect of student teachers' reality has been investigated and in a narrow context. This account has almost entirely been a static view of student teachers' views, ignoring completely how changes takes place in their definitions of teaching. Although some suggestions about how such changes take place may be deduced from such an account, it is primarily an empirical question how such changes take place. It would constitute an important extention of this study to investigate how new definitions emerge as students go through their program or in their first or second year of service. Not by presenting their views in an abstract form as "progressive," "traditional,"

"authoritarian," etc., but as specific situated definitions of the various aspects of teaching.

Another interesting direction which might be taken as an extention of this study is to investigate how the cultural meanings operating in the schools are related to the wider cultural meanings of the society. This would include studying the content of "typifications" which are taken as plausible in educational institutions, how such typifications relate to the dominating ideology or hegemony of the society, and their function in the structuring of the consciousness and the opportunities of pupils and teachers. How are, for example, psychological explanations of pupils' failures related to the dominating ideology of individualism or how is the situated meaning of "noise" related to wider societal meanings of conflicts and aggression? Such an inquiry would necessarily be concerned with what Schutz's called an "institutionalization of relevances," a process which Schutz saw as the primary mode of social control in society, and what many "critical" theorists of education, among them Apple (1979), and Giroux (1980), see as instrumental in the reproduction of existing social relations.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. You are ( ) male, ( ) female?
2. You are ( ) years old?
3. Your teaching experience, not including teaching practice, is ( ) years?
4. Your pre-university education is_____

   Name of school_____
5. In your latest teaching practice, your teaching "plans" turned out:

   ( ) badly

   ( ) all right

   ( ) rather well

   ( ) very well
6. What were the problems you faced in the student teaching? (rate 1 to 5 according to significance so that number 1 is the most significant, 2 the second most, and so on)

   ( ) personal insecurity with pupils

   ( ) pupils' lack of interest

   ( ) overestimation of pupils

   ( ) discipline problems

   ( ) underestimation of pupils

   ( ) class-size and/or ability mix of classes

   ( ) insecurity with colleagues/headmaster

   ( ) to fill up the lesson

   Comment_____

   _____
7. Subjects you felt to be of most use in the student

teaching? (rate 1 to 5 according to significance so that number 1 is the most significant and 5 the least)

( ) behavioristic theories about learning and memory

( ) developmental and personality psychology

( ) sociology and social-psychology

( ) pedagogical philosophy

( ) general didactics

( ) subject-oriented didactics

( ) teaching technology and its use

Comment_____

_____

8. In what way did the above subjects help you in the student teaching?

_____

_____

_____

9. Scholastic achievement is primarily determined by? (rate according to significance)

( ) teaching methods

( ) teacher's interest

( ) intelligence

( ) parents' interests

( ) qualitiy of teaching material

( ) pupils' ambitions

Comment_____

_____

10. Most appropriate combination of classes is?

( ) same age and similar ability

( ) same age and mixed ability

( ) different age and similar ability

( ) different age and mixed ability

Comment_____

_____

11. Discipline problems in schools are first and foremost caused by? (rate according to significance 1 to 4 so that number 1 is the most significant, 2 the second most, and so on.)

( ) little respect for teachers

( ) lack of control in schools

( ) pupils' social background

( ) boring teaching material

( ) inappropriate size and ability mix of classes

( ) that the school does not meet pupils' needs

Comment_____

_____

12. Are exams necessary in primary schools?

( ) yes, they show the teacher and the pupils where the pupil is compared to other pupils

( ) yes, they motivate learning

( ) yes, they are social neccessity to discriminate between those who are able to continue study and others

( ) no

Comment_____

_____

13. The best preparation for the teaching job is? (rate according to significance)

    ( ) more student teaching

    ( ) discussions with established teachers

    ( ) more didactics

    ( ) more sociological and psychological theories

    ( ) more emphasis on specializations

    Comment_____

    _____

14. Control over curriculum content is?

    ( ) determined by curriculum guides

    ( ) determined by regulations

    ( ) largely in the teacher's hands

    ( ) decided by the headmaster

15. Do students at KHI get realistic preparation for the teaching job?

    ( ) no

    ( ) slightly

    ( ) quiet a bit

    ( ) yes

16. What is being discussed?

    Student teacher: "...this came by surprise because this is a small school in a good area."

    _____

    _____

    _____

17. Discuss the following statement: "I spent six hours in

teaching these "poor" kids semantic but later I realized that they didn't learn anything."

18. What does "conditions for learning" mean?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about your teaching practicum experience?
2. What did your teaching plans involve?
3. How successful were these plans?
4. If they did, why did these plans fail?
5. Of what you learned here at the university, what was of most help in your teaching practice?
6. What did you finally end up doing?
7. What part of your teaching experience do you think will be of most help for you in the future?
8. How did you try to solve your problems?
9. How does the school of your dreams look?
10. What made you feel successful in teaching?
11. What were pupils' most visible problems?
12. How did you recognize problem-pupils?
13. What do you feel would be the best ability mix for a class?
14. Do you think that exams are neccessary in primary schools?
15. What do you mean by "old" and "new" teaching methods?
16. What are the main obstacles in trying something new in teaching?
17. What do you mean by "discipline problems?"
18. Why do discipline problems exist?
19. Why do teachers not only teach what they want to?
20. How do you think the KHI prepares students for teaching?
21. Who decides what to teach in schools?
22. What is the teacher's role?